

2006
A Summary of Standing Policy Positions
of the Orthodox Union¹

The Orthodox Union and the North American Jewish Community

1. Jewish Outreach

NCSY is a youth movement of the Orthodox Union that works to enhance and the Jewish lives of high school youth. Yachad seeks to enrich the Jewish lives and opportunities for people with special needs and Our Way seeks to do the same for the hearing impaired. The Seif Jewish Learning Initiative on Campus is the Orthodox Union's effort to bolster Torah lives at American universities. The OU resolves to continue to take vigorous measures to ensure that these critical programs receive the guidance, resources and oversight necessary to achieve its goals.

2. Jewish Unity

The Orthodox Union encourages all Jews seeking divorce to obtain a proper *get* from Halachically competent rabbinical authorities in addition to obtaining a secular divorce in order to halt the tragic and growing division of the Jewish Community that results when these measures are not undertaken.

3. Communal Propriety

The OU urges our synagogues to develop appropriate guidelines for their own activities and for limiting ostentatious consumption and soaring expenses.

4. The Jewish Woman

- a. *Women's Learning* – The OU urges the Orthodox community to increase opportunities for women to pursue and disseminate Torah knowledge and values in accordance with Halacha, and we continue our practice of having sophisticated shiurim and presentations by and for women at our conventions and retreats.
- b. *Leadership* –The OU calls for increased efforts, consistent with Halacha, for the administration of the Orthodox Union to include and encourage women to participate in leadership positions in our organization.

5. The Jewish Home; Domestic Violence

- a. *Prevention* – The OU resolves to support legislation that combats domestic violence, and to encourage our legislators to continually explore ways to prevent these crimes and appropriately punish its perpetrators.
- b. *Response* – The OU supports the training of rabbinical, health, social service, educational, religious and criminal justice personnel as well as Orthodox social workers and family counselors to recognize the symptoms and to properly respond to cases of domestic violence in the Jewish community.

6. Gittin – The Problem of Agunot

¹ Adopted by previous Convention Resolutions or resolutions adopted by the Board of Directors

- a. *Prevention* –The OU resolves to increase the use of pre-nuptial agreements endorsed by the Rabbinical Council of America and Beth Din of America, which attempt to reduce the possibility of a *get* being inappropriately withheld or delayed. We particularly urge rabbis in our community to encourage the use of these agreements when they officiate at weddings.
 - b. *Response* – The OU supports steps endorsed by Halacha which resort to the secular legislature and courts in seeking to redress cases in which a *get* is being inappropriately withheld or delayed.
7. Homeland Security for the Jewish Community
 The Orthodox Union will continue and increase its work with synagogues and schools in our community in the arena of physical safety and security. The Orthodox Union will seek to facilitate the provision of expert guidance on security matters to member synagogues. The Orthodox Union will continue to work to increase the availability of financial assistance – including government funds – to community institutions deemed at-risk and in need of such assistance.

The Orthodox Union and Contemporary American Life

8. Religion and the State
- a. *Religion and State in the United States* – The OU supports the increasing consensus of a religiously informed, but tolerant “public square.” This consensus supports the full participation of all Americans, including those individuals and institutions whose beliefs and actions are informed by faith, in America’s public life. It champions the notion that religion is not merely a “private matter” to be excluded from the public sphere, but that our society is all the stronger when it lets voices of faith into its public conversations. The OU believes that this moderate approach is one that will be most beneficial to all Americans of faith, including American Jews.
 - b. *Religious Accommodation in the Workplace* –The Orthodox Union continues to seek to secure the passage of the Workplace Religious Freedom Act which would restore to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act protections designed to prod employers to accommodate the religious observances of their employees when it is reasonable to do so.
 - c. *Religious Observance in Public Schools* –The Orthodox Union opposes efforts to promote formal, state-sponsored prayer in the public school and at school-sponsored activities. We continue to strongly support public schools’ accommodation of student’s rights to personal religious expression as well as the right of voluntary religious groups and associations to utilize public school facilities for religion-neutral criteria outside of regular school hours.
 - d. *Charitable Choice* – The Orthodox Union supports the notion that religious institutions should be eligible to receive government subsidies for social service programs on the basis of religion-neutral

criteria when the government already supports these programs if given by other non-governmental service providers.

9. Anti-Semitism and Racism

The Orthodox Union supports effective civil rights legislation that will address the problems of social, religious and gender discrimination in order to secure equal employment opportunity for all while eschewing quotas.

10. The Fate of Jonathan Pollard

The Orthodox Union supports ending Jonathon Pollard's incarceration through parole or commutation.

11. Support for the Family

The Orthodox Union promotes initiatives that provide increased support for quality childcare that empower parents to choose the type of childcare they deem most appropriate for their child. In this regard, we believe public policy must allow parents to choose which outside childcare facility – including faith-based facilities – in which to place their child. The Orthodox Union supports continued efforts to reform the tax code in a family friendly manner such as the elimination of the “marriage penalty” and the possibility for “income splitting.”

12. Criminal Justice Issues

- a. *Death Penalty* – The Orthodox Union supports efforts to place a moratorium on executions in the United States and the creation of a commission to review the death penalty procedures within the American judicial system.
- b. *Gun Regulation* – We endorse common sense gun regulation including banning of certain sophisticated attack weapons, and continue to support meaningful national gun control efforts.

13. Biotechnology Research

The Orthodox Union supports efforts, structured in a manner consistent with preserving society's veneration of human life, to allow for the full development of embryonic stem cell and therapeutic cloning research in the United States, Israel and elsewhere, including support for public funding of such research within the United States.

14. Energy Policy

The Orthodox Union supports efforts to increase energy efficiency in home, car and office through improved and more effective utilization of our resources. We support an increase of “CAFÉ” standards and we similarly favor full exploration of the Alaskan Oil Fields subject to rigorous maintenance of environmental standards.

15. “Alternative Life Styles”

The Orthodox Union will continue to forcefully resist all attempts, to legitimize homosexual behavior as the moral equivalent of heterosexual monogamous marriages and as constituting a valid “alternative life style.” Toward that end, the Orthodox Union endorses a constitutional

amendment to preserve in law the definition of marriage as being solely between a man and a woman.

The Orthodox Union and Israel

16. Support for Israel

- a. *Aliyah and Tourism* – The Orthodox Union continues to encourage *aliyah* and positive Israel experiences among its members. We stand behind our brethren in Israel and will work to increase our commitment to tourism to Israel. We urge our constituencies to organize trips and congregational tours to Israel during vacation periods, and to conduct seminars and conventions in Israel.
- b. *Soldiers Missing in Action* -- *Shabbat Parashat VaYeishev* be designated as a *Shabbat Ne'edarei Tzahal* at which time all Orthodox Union synagogue rabbis will be asked to address the issue of the Israeli MIAs in *Shabbat drashot* and prayers, and encourage political action on their behalf.

The Orthodox Union and the Global Community

17. Counterterrorism & Anti-Proliferation

The Orthodox Union supports and will promote legislation and other measures that will deter the abilities of Iran, Iraq, Syria, and other rogue nations to develop non-conventional weapons and to continue to foster and perpetrate acts of terror and violence.

18. International Religious Freedom

That the Orthodox Union shall continue to speak out against religious persecution around the globe. That the Orthodox Union shall work to ensure the continued implementation of the International Religious Freedom Act by the United States government.

19. International Criminal Court

Vigorously oppose the politicization and misuse of the ICC, which should be a completely non-political body.