

## **EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**

### **ANTI-POVERTY**

#### **Emergency Funding and Disaster Relief**

The JCPA believes that emergency preparation and response must become a key priority for cities, states and the federal government, with special attention paid to populations that have historically been vulnerable to natural disasters. Plans must consider the special needs of the elderly, disabled, and other population groups that lack physical or financial resources for transportation, ongoing access to shelter, medical care, food and other life essentials that are required in preparation for and after a devastating experience such as Hurricane Katrina. These plans must also incorporate the lessons of Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma, which revealed inadequacies in our nation's preparedness for both natural disasters and terrorist attacks; and that; Government should ensure that qualified leadership is in place with respect to disaster management, and that the sanctity of life should be the key determining factor that drives official responses in times of crisis and natural disaster. This includes organizations such as, but not limited to, emergency response agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Army Corps of Engineers.

The community relations field should encourage administration and congressional officials, and especially the leadership of both political parties, to visit both New Orleans and other affected areas in Louisiana and Mississippi. Only with a visit can one develop an appreciation for the nature and scope of this disaster; Encourage the federal government to act decisively concerning displaced people and devastated homes, and to consider seriously a Louisiana-led home rehabilitation bill like that of the Baker Bill (the Baker Bill would have created a federal housing corporation, buy devastated homes from homeowners and then re-sell them at market rates), in order for many homeowners to be able to restart their lives); Support investment in strong infrastructure in order to prevent another such tragedy by way of federal funding at the normal minimum level of 65% for both enhanced levee protection and coastal restoration, in adherence with the Louisiana 2025 Coastal Restoration Plan (this plan calls for an investment of \$25 billion in coastal restoration along the Gulf Coast) as well as rebuilding the levees to withstand Level 5 hurricanes; Encourage federal authorities to work alongside state and local officials in the rehabilitation and renewal of social service, educational, and medical facilities in Greater New Orleans; Support governmental funding of critical tools for emergency support. As an example, more than four years after the 9/11 attacks, emergency officials and police enforcement officials across the United States lack devices such as satellite telephones to function effectively at a time when telephone and cellular phone services are not working; Seize the moment and lead a national conversation about our priorities and the role of the private and public spheres to protect the most vulnerable among us. This conversation should highlight the need for regionally-focused, integrated measures, to help our neighbors and community members who lack the physical and/or financial resources for transportation, ongoing access to shelter, medical care, food and other life essentials that are required in a preparation for and after a devastating experience such as Hurricane Katrina; and, assist local leaders in planning for and implementing evacuation, rescue and relief efforts. (Adopted at 2006 Plenum)

The JCPA also believes that it is unacceptable in America, a nation of enormous potential and wealth, for there to exist vast swaths of impoverished people. Poverty, such as that which was thrust into the media spotlight and thus the conscience of all who witnessed the human tragedy in New Orleans, must be confronted and eliminated; the national conversation about the persistence of poverty must also address the issue of race in that it is intertwined with both the causes of poverty and with our public policy response; quality public education and the opportunity for students to graduate with skills that enable them to enter the workforce are vital to addressing the issues of poverty and economic vulnerability;

emergency preparation and response must become a key priority for cities, states and the federal government, with special attention paid to populations that have historically been vulnerable to natural disasters. Plans must consider the special needs of the elderly, disadvantaged, and minority communities and address transportation, ongoing access to shelter, medical care, food and other life essentials that are more readily available to those with personal resources. These plans must also incorporate the lessons of Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma, which revealed inadequacies in our nation's preparedness for both natural disasters and terrorist attacks; religiously affiliated social service providers and educational facilities can play an important role in disaster response, but the transfer of public funds to such providers must be accomplished in a way that maximizes safeguards against religious coercion, proselytization, or discrimination. Furthermore, religious providers of social services cannot take the place of government, which must be held accountable for adequately and effectively responding to disaster; the exigent circumstances of a disaster should never be an excuse to waive vital protections for workers, contractors and others. In no circumstances should any emergency changes in policy be anything but temporary and narrowly tailored; and that, investments in disaster-avoidance infrastructure and human capital must not be sacrificed to achieve short-term cost-savings.

The community relations field should seize the moment and lead a national conversation about our priorities and the role of the private and public spheres to protect the most vulnerable among us. This conversation should highlight the need for regionally-focused, integrated measures to help poor people lift themselves out of poverty. Many such programs enjoy bi-partisan support, including workforce development, job-creation strategies and access to quality education for all, such as HUD's successful Hope VI initiative, President Bush's proposed homeownership tax credit, and expansion of the earned income tax credit hold accountable those leaders at the local, state and federal levels who failed to heed prior warnings about the vulnerability of the New Orleans levee system, and who failed to plan adequately for and implement evacuation, rescue and relief efforts participate in local efforts to assist Gulf Coast evacuees who choose to reside temporarily or permanently in their community support appropriate initiatives – including federal legislation – to provide necessary funding for rebuilding New Orleans and the Gulf Coast and extensions of safety net programs to sustain the victims assist local leaders in planning for and implementing evacuation, rescue and relief efforts in your community; and support investment in strong infrastructure in order to prevent another such tragedy.(Adopted at 2006 Plenum)

### **Poverty and Welfare Reform**

The JCPA supports policies and programs that help move individuals and families out of poverty, that provide work opportunities at wages that allow for self-sufficiency, adequate financial and social service supports -- including job training, transportation and child care services, and expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit (with reasonable safeguards against abuse) – and that attack problems of inadequate education, housing, healthcare, and persistent, fundamental illiteracy (Agenda 2000-2001).

The JCPA views welfare reform as part of an overall commitment and strategy to reduce poverty. We believe the federal government has a primary responsibility for alleviating poverty and for ensuring a basic minimum level of support to provide a decent living standard for the poor. The level of government funding for welfare benefits should be brought as quickly as possible to the federally defined poverty line, with regional adjustments for differentials in living costs. Any action that would further reduce net benefits to individuals, such as taxing welfare dollars, should be rejected. Time limits on cash assistance should be contingent upon individual circumstances (allowing waivers for those with disabilities or other needs), availability of adequate education and training services, the ability of the economy to generate sufficient numbers of permanent jobs within reasonable geographic access, the needs of dependent children, and the government's capacity to provide necessary support services. The JCPA recognizes federal, state, local, private, and individual responsibility in working to develop a coordinated program of

support for welfare recipients and their families. (Principles for Addressing Poverty and Welfare Reform, June 1994)

The JCPA supports the guarantee of federal workplace protections laws covering health, safety and civil rights, for workfare workers (JPP 1998-1999); opposes tax cuts while vital human services are also being cut (JPP 1996-1997).

As TANF and other provisions of the 1996 welfare law are reauthorized, the JCPA supports the adoption of measures to shift the focus from caseload reduction to poverty reduction, including: incentives to states to implement policies that reduce child and adult poverty rates; adequate funding to meet the challenges of an economic downturn and secure strengthened, enhanced services for those with barriers to employment (such as domestic violence, homelessness, physical disability, mental illness, and substance abuse); modified time limit requirements (in light of economic conditions and the number of those remaining on welfare who face significant barriers to employment); modified restrictions on education and training to increase support for skill development, thereby enhancing opportunity for employment with potential for advancement; restoration of benefits to qualified legal immigrants. We also call for improved access and funding for key federal non-TANF programs serving low-income families, including the Food Stamp Program, childcare subsidies through the Child Care Development Block Grant, to move toward serving all eligible children, as well as such programs as Head Start, WIC, and the Social Services Block Grant. Finally, we call for removal from TANF of 'charitable choice' provisions that omit meaningful and effective First Amendment safeguards. (Resolution adopted at the 2002 Plenum)

The JCPA reaffirms its commitment to fully funding social programs that are part of an overall commitment and strategy to confront poverty. The JCPA believes that: The federal and state governments have a primary responsibility for alleviating poverty and for ensuring a basic minimally adequate level of support to provide a decent living standard for the poor; Attempts to shift responsibility for social service funding either to the private sector or to the states through block grants and funding cuts place an unacceptable burden on many states already facing fiscal crisis; Poverty reduction, not just caseload reduction, should be a primary goal of welfare reform, with incentives to states to implement policies that reduce child and adult poverty rates; and, Supporting, strengthening and sustaining public schools is crucial for advancing the primary route for most children into full participation in the nation's economic, political and social life.

The community relations field should: Urge adequate federal and state funding for programs that promote self-sufficiency and reduce poverty; Call for improved access and funding for key federal non-TANF programs serving low-income families, including the Food Stamp Program, childcare subsidies through the Child Care Development Block Grant, LIHEAP, Sections 8 and 202 housing, as well as such programs as Head Start, WIC, Welfare and the Social Services Block Grant; and, Work to make sure that the institution of public education is fully funded. (Resolution adopted by the 2005 Plenum)

### **Minimum Wage**

The JCPA calls for a further increase in the minimum wage and supports the concept of linking the minimum wage to the annual Consumer Price Index to sustain a wage level that reflects changing economic conditions (Agenda 2000-2001).

### **Living Wage**

The JCPA supports state and municipal legislation creating community-based living wage ordinances that make it possible for full-time workers to earn incomes above the federally defined poverty level for their community. These ordinances would apply to individuals whose wages are funded by the taxpayers, whether they are employees of governmental bodies or of government contractors, subcontractors, or

recipients of other forms of government economic assistance. Such ordinances should be developed on a community-by-community basis and considered within the context of local needs and concerns. Legislation should be drawn so as not to have the unintended result of adversely affecting services to the poor. Where necessary, waivers may be provided or other special arrangements made to address any potential negative economic impact to smaller projects and to protect services to low-income constituents generally provided by nonprofit agencies that serve the poor (Resolution adopted at the 2000 Plenum).

### **Budget and Tax Policy**

The JCPA opposes efforts to enact a balanced budget amendment to the U.S. Constitution (Resolution adopted in 1994; Resolution adopted in 1995; JPP 1995-1996, JPP 1996-1997).

To feed the hungry, clothe the poor, heal the sick, and educate our children, our federal government requires the resources that come from tax revenue. The JCPA calls on the Administration and Congress to enact legislation that will allow the federal government to meet its responsibilities to its citizens and to reject efforts to make permanent the recent tax cuts. (Resolution adopted at the 2004 Plenum)

Beginning in the mid-1990s, welfare reform accelerated the funding of entitlement programs by means of capped block grants, shifting responsibility for national anti-poverty programs to cash-strapped states. In addition, the tax cuts passed by Congress since 2001 have resulted in fewer federal dollars available to states, forcing state governments to cut Medicaid, senior programs, child care assistance, and education while providing little if any benefit to middle- and low-income taxpayers.

This devolution, shifting federal responsibilities to state governments, has been exacerbated in many states by draconian proposals, often in the form of ballot initiatives that further undermine the ability to address critical human needs, particularly safety-net services that protect the well-being of the most vulnerable citizens. These proposals include so-called Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR) initiatives aimed at imposing unreasonable limits on state spending and forcing severe reductions in government services (in the November 2006 elections, TABOR initiatives were on the ballot in Maine, Nevada, Nebraska and Oregon). Additionally, there have been proposals to change the tax code to allow for additional deductions, primarily benefiting the wealthiest at the expense of the neediest.

At the federal level, some advocate pay-as-you-go proposals whereby program funding increases would have to be offset by funding cuts, while tax cuts would not have to be similarly offset. Also, proposals for a fixed deficit target would trigger automatic across-the-board cuts in entitlement spending if targets are not met.

Commensurate with the JCPA's Confronting Poverty initiative, the community relations field should oppose those state or federal tax measures and budget procedures that would restrict or impede funding for vital social services; Oppose Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR) and other initiatives that threaten to paralyze state governments' ability to provide essential services; Continue to work to ensure that social services and public education are fully funded; Urge the federal government to reexamine block grant formulas to insure that states receive adequate federal funding to account for demographic changes (e.g. increasing elderly and poor populations) that occur over time and that require additional social services. (Resolution adopted by 2007 Plenum)

### **Social Security Reform**

The JCPA will respond to reform proposals based upon criteria in its Statement on Social Security Reform and congruent with policies of the United Jewish Communities, representing the health and human service agencies concerned with the welfare of the Jewish elderly. Among these criteria, reforms should: retain Social Security's original purpose, universal quality, and reliability; ensure all beneficiaries,

including those with disabilities, receive a minimum level of financial support; retain the progressive benefit structure through which low income earners receive a higher proportion of their lifetime aggregate earnings; secure aspects of the current benefit structure which address the particular financial needs of women; ensure that any change in age of eligibility includes adjustments to address the needs of those with limited or no other source of income; not adversely affect legal immigrants and refugees (Statement adopted in June 1999).

### **Housing, Hunger, and Homelessness**

The JCPA supports legislation with adequate funding to ensure that low-income individuals and families can access safe affordable housing, and measures to provide emergency assistance to overcrowded shelters (Agenda 1999-2000). We believe every American, regardless of income, is entitled to a safe, affordable home; that no one should be reduced to hunger in order to pay for housing; that the federal government bears primary responsibility, working with state and local government, to ensure housing is available to all who need it (Statement adopted in September 1990). The JCPA believes the Food Stamps Program should be maintained and adequately funded as a federal entitlement (JPP 1995-1996).

### **Affordable Housing**

The dignity that comes from having one's own home is an essential component of a just society. The Jewish community has a long-standing commitment to affordable housing. The Section 8 and Section 202 programs are clearly indispensable in combating the housing crisis, but they produce few new units of affordable housing. To this end, the possibility of a National Affordable Housing Trust Fund offers a policy option with a tremendous amount of potential.

The JCPA calls upon the federal government to acknowledge its fundamental responsibility to ensure that all Americans have access to safe and decent housing; create a national housing policy which addresses the need for adequate and affordable housing for all; fully fund the Section 8 Housing Voucher Program so that all eligible families can access this vital assistance; ensure that the Section 8 program remains a federal priority and does not become a block granted program; provide an increase in funding for Section 202 housing to address the rapid growth of poor and frail senior citizens who would benefit from housing; call upon Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to increase their activities and investments in affordable housing; and support the establishment of a National Affordable Housing Trust Fund to address the dearth of affordable housing, and create 1.5 million units of rental housing for the lowest income families and individuals by the end of the decade.

The community relations field should educate the public on the scope of the current housing crisis and the need for affordable housing; support local efforts to provide for affordable housing needs, including state and local housing trust funds; urge Congress to support and fully fund the Section 8 and Section 202 housing programs; additionally, urge Congress to support the establishment of a National Affordable Housing Trust Fund which would create 1.5 million units of rental housing for the lowest income families and individuals by the end of the decade; encourage Jewish individuals and institutions to join other faith communities in investing in Community Economic Development, to provide loan funds in capital-starved communities, for affordable housing; participate in faith-based coalitions that support the development of affordable housing and the prevention of homelessness; educate the Jewish community on its responsibility to ensure access to affordable housing in all geographic communities. (Resolution adopted by the 2004 Plenum)

### **Strengthening Families and Children**

The JCPA supports increased investment at all levels of government in both financial and human resources to ensure that children and families are aware of and can access public and private services that provide quality, affordable childcare, health care, and early childhood education. We support: efforts to

improve the quality of childcare and early education programs through increased training, higher standards, and higher compensation for childcare providers; family-friendly fiscal policies, including expansion of the Dependent Care Tax Credit, which should be increased and made refundable so that the poorest families can benefit; efforts to improve the quality of childcare and early education programs through increased training, higher standards, and higher pay for childcare providers (Agenda 2000-2001).

Within the juvenile justice system, the JCPA supports efforts to shift emphasis away from incarceration toward rehabilitation; opposes efforts to weaken current law, or to include provisions that would harm children or place them at risk of assault and abuse in adult jails; advocates more funding for violence prevention and early intervention efforts and for strong gun control measures to help address the high death toll of our nation's children as a result of gun violence. (Agenda 2000-2001)

### **Sweatshops and Child Labor**

In light of continuing sweatshop and child labor abuses, the JCPA resolves to: Encourage the use of independent third party monitoring programs by groups such as human rights and religious organizations that bring trained investigators to conduct independent and unannounced audits of factories and provide information on their findings to consumers; support initiatives to encourage manufacturers, including retailers who act as manufacturers, to take greater responsibility for contractors' violations, including overseas; commend industry programs that monitor production where independent monitors confirm that no sweatshop or child labor is being used; encourage purchase of merchandise from companies whose self-monitoring has been shown to be effective by independent companies; call upon the federal and state governments to provide adequate staffing and funding to enforce existing workers' protection statutes; encourage enactment of municipal, state, and federal statutes or ordinances that prohibit government agencies from purchasing goods made under sweatshop conditions; pledge JCPA participation and urge participation by constituent agencies in local and national coalitions to combat child labor and sweatshop abuses. (Resolution adopted at the 2001 Plenum)

### **The Causes and Prevention of Crime and Violence**

Understanding that anti-crime legislation alone is not sufficient without commitment also to attack the underlying social ills that engender criminal activity and allow it to flourish, the JCPA supports effective crime control through legislation recognizing that prevention and early intervention are key to long term efforts to reduce crime and which balances these measures with support for improved policing techniques and strong enforcement strategies to deal with hard-core violent criminals. We support alternative drug treatment and rehabilitation programs for non-violent offenders and strengthened, expanded measures to control guns and ammunition and judicial discretion in criminal sentencing, subject to appellate review. We oppose excessive or indiscriminate use of mandatory minimum sentencing laws. In keeping with longstanding opposition to capital punishment, we oppose efforts to expand the category of crimes punishable by the death penalty and to unduly restrict a prisoner's ability to file habeas corpus petitions. We support a range of prevention measures including youth education and public awareness campaigns, and voluntary guidelines concerning depiction of violence in movies, television programming music, video and computer games. (Policy and Guidelines adopted June 1995)

### **Predatory Lending**

The JCPA calls for efforts to educate our community members about the dangers of predatory lending; calls for passage of legislation to address the immediate home foreclosure crisis and the underlying concerns around predatory lending; urges Jewish community members to reach out to partners in their communities to address this issue; urges community members with the appropriate skills to offer pro bono assistance to victims of predatory lending who cannot afford legal counsel. (Resolution Adopted at the 2008 JCPA Plenum)

## **EDUCATION**

### **Jewish Day School Education**

The JCPA reaffirms the October 1999 vote of its Board of Directors endorsing the significance and value of Jewish day school education and calls for increased individual and communal support for Jewish day schools. (Resolution adopted at the 2000 Plenum)

The JCPA encourages its local member agencies to assist and support federations in meeting the recommendations of the UJC/JESNA report, as they deem appropriate based on individual community needs. The JCPA believes that "the responsibility for solving the crisis in Jewish education lies first and foremost within the Jewish community." The UJC/JESNA report is an invaluable tool in guiding the federation system to be an important part of strengthening all forms of Jewish education in America and the JCPA strongly supports continental and local efforts to comply with its recommendations. (Adopted at the JCPA Board of Directors, on October 18, 1999)

### **Public Education Policy**

The JCPA remains committed to supporting, strengthening and sustaining public schools, the primary route for most children, especially poor children, into full participation in the nation's economic, political, and social life. We believe that reform of our education delivery system, including improvements in early childhood education and in programs for schools in high poverty areas requires concerted community support and that school finance equity is an essential component of excellence in public education. We support legislation to ensure that resources reach the schools that need them, to equalize education spending, restore decaying buildings, enforce higher teaching standards, reduce class size, and ensure that qualified teachers are recruited and retained for all schools. Efforts to equalize educational opportunity should include providing access at all high schools to advance placement courses designed to give students exposure to college level work, so that students applying for college admission have the same opportunity regardless of where they went to school. We support full funding for early childhood initiatives that enable children to enter school with the maximum potential to learn. (Agenda 2000-2001)

The JCPA opposes efforts to dismantle the U.S. Department of Education; supports instructional programs in values education that teach such shared values as citizenship, social responsibility and mutual respect (JPP 1995-1996). We support implementation of programs that reinforce the democratic process and build support for pluralism while respecting the rich ethnic diversity of students, their respective cultures, languages and religions (JPP 1992-1993). The JCPA opposes policies that divert resources from public schools, such as voucher programs that provide public dollars to non-public schools, whether secular or sectarian; we strongly support private funding for Jewish day school education (Agenda 1999-2000).

DISSENT: The Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America (UOJCA) continues to favor educational choice programs.

### **Charter Schools**

The JCPA believes properly structured and monitored charter schools may prove to be one among several effective vehicles for public education reform. However, because these schools operate free of many state regulations, effective safeguards and adequately funded monitoring procedures must be in place to protect against abuses as well as against educational failures. The JCPA will work to ensure that charter schools meet appropriate accountability and performance criteria. Among these schools should: Establish and enforce appropriate measures for regular periodic fiscal and academic assessment; comply with federal

and state anti-discrimination laws, health and safety regulations, and constitutional provisions regarding separation of church and state; be non-sectarian in program, admissions policies, employment practices and all other operations; require that teachers and students meet educational performance standards consistent with those for other public schools; incorporate adequate safeguards addressing working conditions and rights in contract and employment provisions for school employees; and provide appropriate safeguards to ensure against racial, ethnic and economic segregation and to prevent discrimination based on disability or special need. Recognizing concerns about the risk of diverting to charter schools scarce public dollars urgently needed to strengthen under-funded traditional public schools, we must work simultaneously to re-evaluate state funding formulas so local districts are not penalized when charter schools are established. (Resolution adopted at the 2000 Plenum)

### **Public School Choice**

The JCPA supports “educational choice” within the public school system as one of several strategies for reform that may be effective when implemented as part of a comprehensive reform effort designed to meet the needs of varied student populations. Choice plans must be limited strictly to public schools; must not segregate or discriminate. (Statement adopted at the 1992 Plenum)

## **HEALTH CARE**

### **Overview**

The JCPA supports development of system-wide approaches to assuring quality, affordable health care coverage, including mental health care, for individuals and families, regardless of income; legislation to regulate managed care that assures accessible quality health care coverage consistent with JCPA Principles on National Health Care Coverage (adopted June 1993); “Return-to-Home” legislation; and legislation to prevent genetic-based insurance and employment discrimination and to ensure the confidentiality of medical records. Any restructuring of Medicare must ensure the program’s fiscal integrity and the well being of beneficiaries. Reforms must take into account the special needs of the Medicare population, including the need for coordinated, high quality care for people with chronic illness, available in all delivery settings, both managed care and fee-for-service, and the need to make prescription drug coverage more affordable. Seniors with the desire and capacity to remain in their homes should be able to do so and receive home health care under Medicare. (Agenda 2000-2001; Resolution adopted in October 1998; Resolution adopted in June 1997) Medicare and Medicaid must remain entitlement programs with adequate funding; Medicaid must remain available universally to the poor and disabled. (Agenda 1998-99)

The JCPA continues to support with ever greater vigor the JCPA’s previous resolution calling for universal access to health care, supports efforts by Sens. Hatch (R-UT) and Wyden (D-OR) to establish a Citizens Health Care Working Group to facilitate public debate and plans to improve the health care system for Americans and joins the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the California Endowment, and their national partner organizations in supporting Cover the Uninsured Week, a week-long educational and advertising campaign to bring attention to the needs of those lacking access to affordable health coverage.

The community relations field should urge Congressional representatives to support legislative efforts to enact universal health care, participate in health care community meetings sponsored by the Citizens Health Care Working Group, educate the public on the lack of affordable health coverage, especially among working families, and join local coalitions supporting and participating in Cover the Uninsured Week and other similar activities, including town hall meetings, teaching events on campus, health fairs and interfaith events. (Adopted by the 2003 Plenum).

### **Long Term Care and Support Services for the Elderly**

The JCPA affirms its commitment to working for the development and implementation of creative national and statewide policies that provide quality, affordable long-term care services, consistent with principles of affordability, consumer choice, availability of both in-home and community-based care, and adequate caregiver support. We support: educational efforts to increase awareness by Congress and the Administration of the limitations in current national health care insurance programs, not designed to provide adequate long term care services; redesign of Medicaid and Medicare programs, through appropriate legislation, to ensure greater choice, access to information about options, and increased access to and availability of in-home and community care, strong consumer protections and public accountability for public dollars; stronger state and federal efforts to ensure promotion and availability of quality, affordable private insurance programs for young and older Americans alike; initiatives to ensure the ability of older adults to access religiously and culturally appropriate housing, home care, hospice, acute care and long-term care facilities; federal and state government support for innovative social and health service programs for the elderly, including those that integrate social services and housing for the elderly population; Increased funding of affordable housing for low and moderate-income older adults and related support services; new options for covering and containing some portion of the cost of prescription drugs; increased support for caregivers; increased funding for elder abuse investigation and services, education and outreach; full and adequate funding for services provided under the Older Americans Act; federal and state initiatives, including training and competitive salaries, to address the underlying causes of elder care staffing shortages, particularly with regard to nursing shortages. (Resolution adopted at the 2001 Plenum)

### **Prescription Drug Coverage**

The JCPA calls upon the federal government to pass a Medicare prescription drug benefit for Medicare recipients. Legislation should assure that no Medicare recipient will be denied access to prescription drugs because of income level, provide a benefit that is affordable to everyone, comprehensive and without significant gaps in coverage, provide a benefit that is predictable and secure; and not funded at the expense of existing Medicare services and provide a benefit that is publicly administered, like the traditional fee-for-service Medicare system, and not administered through private, for-profit insurance companies.

The community relations field should educate the public on the need for prescription drug coverage for Medicare beneficiaries, urge Congressional representatives to enact legislation to provide a prescription drug benefit for Medicare beneficiaries, and work with federal and state government agencies and local coalition partners to ensure that Medicare beneficiaries are aware of options for prescription drug coverage, including state and supplemental programs. (Adopted at the 2003 Plenum).

### **Mental Health**

The JCPA supports Federal and state legislation to require parity between physical and mental health coverage by health insurance carriers, both private and public, increased funding for mental health services, as well as for mental health research and the development and testing of innovative mental health programs, greater government and community support for assistance to family caregivers who struggle to coordinate services from numerous public and private sources, state legislation to provide funding to fully implement the Olmstead Supreme Court decision to provide community based treatment for those with mental illness when placement in a less restrictive setting is appropriate, government integration and coordination of quality housing and mental health systems to provide comprehensive assistance (including access to a variety of affordable housing options from independent living

arrangements to supported or supervised arrangements), an end to unlawful workplace discrimination against those with mental illness, in fact as well as in law; government development of additional programs to aid qualified workers with mental illness in returning to the workplace, and to assist employers in working with them, mechanisms to ensure that those who are incarcerated and suffer from mental illness receive appropriate and humane treatment; placement of nonviolent, mentally ill criminal offenders in community-based mental health programs, law enforcement agency policies, practices, and specialized training to help police and corrections officers deal appropriately with individuals with mental illnesses, greater government attention to the youth within the justice system, and the need for increased funding for community-based treatment programs for this population, greater resources devoted to “problem-solving courts”, whose charge will be to holistically address the needs of mentally ill defendants, a coordinated system of care for children and teenagers with mental health problems emphasizing early recognition, prevention, and intervention, and in those states and federal jurisdictions that retain the death penalty, exclusion of people with mental illness from consideration for a death penalty sentence,

Further, the JCPA calls on Jewish communal organizations and agencies to provide health coverage for employees that guarantees parity in mental health coverage, and participate in communal efforts to destigmatize mental illness, to provide accurate information about mental health problems, improve public awareness of effective treatment, and encourage individuals to seek help. (Adopted by the Board of Directors, June 2002)

### **The Environment and Public Health**

The JCPA urges Congress to create a Nationwide Health Tracking Network to be housed at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and to give the Centers the authority necessary to establish a comprehensive, national repository of information about the incidence of disease. All feasible actions to ensure that personal health information is kept strictly confidential must be required by law and their implementation carefully monitored. Only aggregate information should be made available to individuals, communities and researchers. The Centers must also be given the mandate and necessary funds to conduct investigations of possible connections between diseases and environmental factors. (Adopted by the 2003 Plenum).

### **Sexual Education in Public Schools**

The JCPA believes that public schools have an obligation to provide young people with accurate and effective sexuality education and, therefore, that current, ineffective abstinence-only-until-marriage sexuality programs in public schools should be replaced by comprehensive, medically accurate, age-appropriate sexuality education that does not promote any particular religious viewpoint on sexuality. The community relations field should support legislation at the state and federal level that provides funding for, and addresses comprehensive sexuality education in the public schools, advocating to have any abstinence only programs broadened to include comprehensive sexuality education. (Resolution adopted at the 2008 JCPA Plenum)

### **Stem Cell and Therapeutic Cloning Research**

Society today stands on the threshold of a new era in biomedical research. A debate has emerged in American society at large and among our elected leaders as to whether public policy should permit, encourage, restrict or ban the further conduct of this biomedical research. The community relations field should support: Research using embryonic stem cells including those developed through Somatic Cell Nuclear Transfer (SCNT); Government funding for such research; Efforts by the scientific community to develop regulations and monitor those using SCNT technology; Appropriate legislative actions consistent with the above objectives, including legislation that encourages the development of new stem cell lines in addition to the existing stem cell lines already approved for funding by the federal

government; The creation of a fully funded and empowered oversight body comprising of scientists and ethicists to monitor this research, paying special attention to ensuring that the research is restricted to stem cells of very early embryonic development, prior to implantation in a uterus. The community relations field should oppose efforts to restrict or penalize scientists, clinicians, or patients for participating in stem cell research and SCNT technology for therapeutic purposes. (Resolution adopted by the 2005 Plenum)

### **Medicaid**

In the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress we anticipate that there will once again be efforts to restructure and reduce funding in the Medicaid program. The JCPA takes this opportunity to reaffirm our historic commitment to the appropriate funding of Medicaid as an entitlement program and our opposition to funding Medicaid through block grants to the states.

Commensurate with JCPA's Confronting Poverty initiative, the community relations field should: Join other advocates in opposing devolving Medicaid to the states; Support the federal and state governments' obligation to assure adequate and affordable health care coverage, including prescription drug benefits, for all individuals and families, in need; Opposes efforts to cut, cap and block grant Medicaid; Oppose legislative efforts that might end the Medicaid entitlement; Encourage agencies and governmental departments to explore alternatives, which will provide needed Medicaid services more effectively. (Resolution adopted by the 2005 Plenum)

### **Racial Disparities in Healthcare**

The JCPA will promote discussion and advocacy in the Jewish community with the goal of securing quality affordable coverage to uninsured families; Calls for passage of the Healthcare Equality and Accountability Act (HR 3561 and S. 1580) which addresses the crisis of racial disparities in health care; Encourages our community actively to engage coalition members to inform the community at large on the lack of affordable health coverage, especially among working families, including a disproportionate number of minority families; and, Will promote affordable health-care for each and every member of the community regardless of sex, age, race, creed or color. (Adopted at 2006 Plenum)

## **IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES**

The JCPA supports an equitable immigration policy that protects the human rights of all newcomers and the civil liberties of every U.S. resident; generous levels of refugee admissions and full funding for refugee slots, including those for Jews from the former Soviet Union; a further extension of the Lautenberg Amendment. We support full restoration of public benefits and civil liberties protections for legal immigrants, refugees and asylees. This includes initiatives to expand eligibility for SSI, Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) for legal immigrants who entered the country after the welfare law's enactment and the restoration of due process protections undermined by current law for legal immigrants and asylum-seekers, particularly with regard to expedited removal. (Agenda 2000-2001)

The JCPA supports an open, fair and timely naturalization process that reduces the application backlog without impeding access to those legitimately seeking to naturalize, or further restricting eligibility for citizenship (Agenda 1999-2000). While we support proposals to separate INS service and enforcement functions to improve accountability and clarity of mission, there must be strong leadership and coordination of the two functions to ensure consistent, unified immigration policy (Agenda 2000-2001).

The JCPA opposes "English-Only" initiatives, which can deny foreign-born citizens equal access to the rights of all citizens. We support increased availability of "English-as-a-second-language" and other training programs to help immigrants and refugees move into mainstream American life (JPP 1990-1991).

The JCPA supports immigration policy that retains family reunification as its basis and provides additional immigration slots for special skills (JPP 1991-1992). We support an open admissions policy that maintains the pluralistic character of American society and does not prefer one national group at the expense of another; we oppose the use of rigid caps on entry to the U.S. (JPP 1990-1991). While the JCPA supports humane measures to control illegal immigration, we oppose a national identification card system as violating privacy rights and civil liberties (JPP 1995-1996). We oppose use of employer sanctions to prevent employment of undocumented workers, believing it fosters discrimination against minorities whom employers may regard as "foreign" (JPP 1992-1993). The JCPA supports efforts to update a provision of immigration law known as "registry", which provides for administrative adjustment of immigrant status, by moving the eligibility cut-off date from 1972 to 1986, allowing immigrants who entered the U.S. prior to January 1, 1986 to become lawful permanent residents; we favor also proposals that would, over time, advance the cut-off date further, to 1990 by the year 2006 (Resolution adopted in June 2000).

### **Comprehensive Immigration Reform**

Our American-Jewish values necessitate confronting difficult immigration challenges facing our country and our community. At present, one of the most critical issues is the problem of undocumented migration to the United States. The JCPA believes that the United States should maintain support for fair and generous legal immigration policies as an expression of our country's core values of refugee protection, family reunification and economic opportunity. Unlike in previous cases where the United States government tried to curb the flow of undocumented migrants coming to the United States to find work, a Comprehensive Immigration Reform program, accompanied by a commitment to enforcement, has a great chance of being effective. Efforts to respond to the problem of undocumented migration must recognize the economic realities that underlie this flow of migrant workers, and the United States' security needs that necessitate differentiation between individuals arriving for economic opportunities and those who seek entry to threaten American lives as dangerous criminals or terrorists. Comprehensive Immigration Reform proposals should respond to this challenge in a manner that respects the human dignity and human rights of those who wish to enter. Such efforts should include programs that will simultaneously recognize economic realities and apply the labor rights and legal remedies to documented and undocumented individuals. They should also create opportunities for undocumented workers to earn legal status while providing needed labor in the United States. New legislation should aim to actually penalize the employers who knowingly hire undocumented workers, rather than the current situation in which the greatest impact is jeopardizing the status of those workers. Finally, they should address the longstanding problem of unacceptable backlogs in the family reunification visa categories.

The community relations field should educate to raise awareness of current immigration policies, their consequences including humanitarian issues at the border crossings, and factors that contribute to associated risks for migrant workers; Monitor legislative proposals and advocate for Comprehensive Immigration Reform – that addresses flow across the border, earned legalization and family visa backlogs – that effectively values human dignity and allows enforcement resources to be focused on dangerous criminal or terrorist migrants; Work with interfaith and ethnic communities in coalitions to advance Comprehensive Immigration Reform; Encourage the successful acculturation of new immigrants that includes an appreciation for American democratic institutions, patriotism, and constitutional principles that we all hold dear, including equality under the law and due process; Work with the Administration and Congress to shape Comprehensive Immigration Reform. While we applaud the President's January 7, 2004 speech as it reflects the contributions of both documented and undocumented immigrants, and a

need to fix a broken system, this initial proposal falls short in helping these newcomers become fully integrated into our society; Call on the Administration, Congress, the Jewish Community and all Americans concerned about the country's future to recommit to the complex process of developing a comprehensive proposal to reform United States immigration laws that will insure that our immigration system is secure, more humane, and free from stereotyping and xenophobia. (Resolution adopted by 2004 Plenum)

Comprehensive reform of the United States immigration system is long overdue. The current morass of illegality, human suffering, and violence must be ended. There is growing recognition of the need for broad-based workable solutions and a consistent approach by the states and the federal government. Based upon American values of democracy, tolerance, entrepreneurial spirit and equality under the law and core Jewish values of human rights, human dignity and fairness.

The JCPA believes that recognizing that nations have the right and need to secure their borders and that national security is of critical importance: a) The United States has a valid national interest in promoting the rule of law, securing borders and excluding those who engage in criminal or terrorist activity; b) The U.S. should develop effective, reasonable and consistent security standards, to be applied to those wishing to enter as well as to those who are already here, whether legally or illegally; and c) The U.S. should allocate sufficient resources for the enforcement of immigration laws. Recognizing the inherent value and uniqueness of all individuals, their diverse origins, and the contributions that they can and do make to this country, many who migrate to the United States, are, for the most part: a) Hardworking and willing to endure great personal sacrifice to improve their circumstances; b) Devoted to family values, seeking to provide a better future for their children, and committed to educating their children; and c) Open and eager to embrace American culture and values, while preserving the culture and values of their countries of origin. Recognizing that the United States was founded by individuals who came here in search of religious and political freedom and economic opportunity, and based upon the ethical imperative to 'welcome the stranger,' United States policy should make every effort to: a) Institute uniform, compassionate and humane protocols and criteria to process refugee and asylum claims, so that those fleeing persecution are protected; and b) Be accessible and welcoming toward those who wish to come here to work and live.

In view of the core American principles of equality, fairness and due process of law: a) Those entering the country legally with the intention to settle here permanently should not be subject to a delayed process as a result of any administrative procedures or legislative changes; b) A rational, timely, and judicious mechanism should be developed to establish immigrants' status; c) Punitive measures that criminalize actions by immigrants, social service providers, and others--actions that would not otherwise be prohibited--are unrealistic, potentially discriminatory, and harmful to individuals and communities; d) Undocumented workers are vulnerable to exploitation in the workplace and should be afforded appropriate protection as to working conditions and standards; e) A family reunification policy should be implemented to eradicate the prolonged and inhumane separation of family members: children and parents, spouses, and siblings.

Recognizing that the United States has an interest in economic growth and revitalization: a) A rational system of immigration fosters entrepreneurship, attracts productive workers, and helps the nation maintain its competitive edge; b) When those presently undocumented become "legal," their contribution to the U.S. economy through work, paying taxes, and buying goods and services is enhanced; c) For the U.S. to remain on the cutting edge in the sciences, the humanities, and the arts, and to foster the cross-cultural exchange of ideas that enriches our society, U.S. policy should be welcoming to students, researchers, academics and artists; and d) Any changes in immigration laws must not erode the ability of American citizens to compete fairly for jobs at all skill levels. Recognizing the American commitment to

democracy and to the democratic decision-making process: a) Those individuals and groups who will be most affected by U.S. immigration policy should have an opportunity to be represented in the reform process; and b) The Jewish community should continue to work in coalitions and partnerships with these individuals and groups and should participate actively in the reform process.

The Jewish Community Relations field should work to ensure that the U.S. develops reasonable, consistent, and effective security standards that will promote U.S. national security; Participate in coalitions and partnerships with individuals and groups in the immigration reform process; Work to ensure that those entering the country legally with the intention to settle here permanently are afforded a reasonable, effective, and judicious process, and that a rational and timely mechanism be developed to establish immigrants' status; Work to develop a family reunification policy to eradicate the prolonged and inhumane separation of family members, such as children and parents, spouses, and siblings; Work to ensure that U.S. policy will grant asylum and protection to refugees and be accessible to those who need refuge from persecution; Create a high-level office within the Department of Homeland Security to oversee all issues relating to asylum and expedited removal; Allow all asylum applicants to appeal their claims to an immigration judge in order to reduce the risk that those claiming asylum are deported unjustifiably; Establish detention standards appropriate for asylum seekers and seek alternatives to detention; Promulgate regulations to promote consistent implementation of parole criteria; Eliminate the arbitrary one-year deadline for filing asylum claims; and Reject further erosions of asylees' rights in the United States.

The community relations field should follow these strategies to implement Immigration Reform: Participate in coalitions and partnerships with other community groups; Work with local, state and national legislators whenever possible; JCPA and its members should continue to work with organizations such as HIAS, AJC and others already committed to immigration reform, and engage other organizations that would potentially be interested in participating; Work with all synagogue movements and streams of Judaism; Engage in efforts and activities to combat stereotypes about immigrants; Work to ensure that employers abide by state and federal laws with respect to misclassifications of employees, workers compensation insurance, and workplace health and safety regulations. (Resolution adopted by 2007 Plenum)

### **Political Asylum Protection**

The JCPA believes that the U.S. political asylum system is a vital source of protection for thousands of victims of persecution who turn to the United States with hope for a new and secure future, including Jewish asylum applicants from the former Soviet Union, Iran, and elsewhere, and women fleeing "honor" crimes and other gender-based violence; While homeland security concerns require the evaluation and, in some instances, modification of immigration programs, it is inappropriate to play on people's justifiable fears of terrorism to undermine important mechanisms in our country's humanitarian programs. It is particularly inappropriate to argue for dramatic restrictions on asylum on the basis of old cases in which applications were made prior to the 1995 asylum reform regulations, in which asylum was not granted, or where there is no concrete evidence of a terrorist act as proof that asylum must be dramatically restricted. In fact, U.S. law specifically prohibits a grant of asylum to anyone who has been convicted of a particularly serious crime, including any of the broad range of crimes designated as aggravated felonies under the immigration laws, and constitutes a danger to the community; has committed a serious nonpolitical crime abroad; is or may reasonably be considered to be a danger to the security of the United States; or has engaged in terrorist activity. Additionally, the Immigration and Nationality Act provides that "asylum cannot be granted until the identity of the applicant has been checked against all appropriate records or databases maintained by the Attorney General and by the Secretary of State...to determine any grounds on which the alien may be inadmissible to, or deportable from, the United States, or ineligible to apply for or be granted asylum"; Asylum seekers should continue to receive protection from the United

States, and that Congress and the Administration should work together to improve the climate for the adjudication of their claims. Specifically, the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security should provide greater protection to and access to resources for women fleeing domestic violence, sexual assault, forced prostitution, honor killings, female genital mutilation, and other types of gender-based persecution. Additionally, other reforms that should receive strong consideration are proposals to eliminate the arbitrary annual caps on adjustment of status for asylees and on full asylum for victims of coercive population control; to eliminate the one year filing deadline and allow asylum claims to be judged on their merits; to provide greater access to parole for asylum seekers who can demonstrate to an Immigration Judge that they are not dangers to the community or flight risks; and to provide all applicants with full opportunities to present their claims to an Immigration Judge instead of deporting them without a hearing through the expedited removal system; Congress and the Administration should continue to seek additional legal protection mechanisms to assist vulnerable migrants – such as women and children – as has been done through the Violence Against Woman Act (VAWA).

The community relations field should work in coalitions to ensure that the public receives accurate information about both the humanitarian needs served by the U.S. refugee and asylum programs and about any possible issues for reform are fully appreciated by the public; Work to promote greater refugee or asylee protection for women, religious practitioners and other victims of violence and persecution; Oppose efforts to misrepresent the impact of the asylum system on national security as a justification for efforts to reduce protection for asylum seekers; and support the reform of any factually-supported and legitimate problems with the asylum system that are identified. (Resolution adopted by the 2005 Plenum)

## **INTERGROUP RELATIONS**

### **Race and Ethnicity**

The JCPA reaffirms its longstanding commitment to racial justice and equal opportunity. So long as discrimination persists, the JCPA believes that properly structured affirmative action policies that consider race as one among many relevant factors remain necessary to correct injustice. However, other comprehensive measures also are needed to increase equality of opportunity. These include strong anti-poverty programs, attention to issues of criminal justice, including an end to gratuitous racial profiling, and concerted focus on improving the quality of public education in high poverty areas (Agenda 2000-2001)

### **Racial Stereotypes, Epithets and Rhetoric**

Recognizing that damaging racial stereotypes, epithets and rhetoric continue to plague the Native American community, perpetuating cultural bias and prejudice, the JCPA supports the battle to end the use of degrading images of Native people, their symbols, and cultural and religious traditions in the names and nicknames of sports teams, in logos, and mascots. (Resolution adopted at the 2000 Plenum)

### **Affirmative Action**

The JCPA supports affirmative action by both government and the private sector that provide such outreach remedies as: compensatory education, training and job counseling; intensive recruitment of qualified and qualifiable individuals, using not only traditional but also public and private resources that reach members of disadvantaged groups; and ongoing review of established job and admissions requirements to assure that they are performance related and free of bias. While opposing quotas as inconsistent with principles of equality, we recognize the need for numerical data and statistical procedures to measure and help assure the effectiveness of affirmative action programs. (Policy adopted June 1973, amended in 1975 and 1981, reaffirmed April 1995)

The JCPA believes Affirmative action is an important safeguard of racial equality, and should be supported as long as race is one of many factors, quotas are not utilized, and only individuals judged to be qualified are accepted or rewarded and programs are narrowly tailored to achieve diversity; There is continued need for numerical data and statistical procedures to measure and help assure the effectiveness of affirmative action programs, so long as those data are not used to establish numerical quotas; The Supreme Court was correct in stating that “the state has a compelling interest” in ensuring diverse students bodies, using race as one factor among others in university admissions.

The community relations field should: Oppose legislative initiatives or popular referenda that seek to ban affirmative action programs that are consistent with the position previously established by JCPA; Work with broad and diverse coalitions to increase grassroots support for affirmative action programs that are consistent with the position previously established by JCPA and oppose affirmative action bans that target such programs; Continue to educate the Jewish community about affirmative action and its importance from both civil rights and Jewish values perspectives; Reassure our partners in other ethnic communities – especially the African American community and other constituencies that support affirmative action – that we favor affirmative action programs, as outlined in JCPA policy. (Resolution adopted by the 2004 Plenum)

### **The Census**

The JCPA supports the use of statistical sampling as a reliable and legitimate means of supplementing direct enumeration in the preparation of the Census, to ensure that all segments of the American population are equally represented (Resolution adopted in October 1998). The JCPA will press for the funding needed to produce adjusted figures, using scientific sampling, for non-apportionment purposes and for changes to census law to allow the Census Bureau to prepare and use the most accurate and complete census figures for all purposes (Agenda 1999-2000).

### **Election Reform**

The JCPA calls upon the Administration and Congress to work together to study, evaluate, and provide financial assistance to state governments to implement improvements in the nation’s elections system. Similarly, state and local governments must seek to improve the election process to insure that all votes are counted and that all persons wishing to vote are given a meaningful opportunity to do so. Toward that end, the JCPA calls for: The elimination of punch card ballot systems and other outmoded equipment and replacement with accurate, reliable, and verifiable modern equipment; federal financial assistance to states for the modernization of voting equipment; consideration of any proposal that encourages and facilitates the exercise of franchise, including but not limited to extended polling hours, recruiting additional poll workers and enhanced training and education for poll workers, use of the Internet, and/or mail-in ballots, provided that appropriate protections can be implemented to minimize the risk of fraud; adoption of uniform standards for ballots, voting procedures, registration and vote counting; development of workable mechanisms for prompt resolution of voting-day, election-related problems; review of federal legislation relating to presidential elections, particularly legislation setting deadlines for states to certify electors to qualify for "safe harbor" protection, and setting the date for electors to vote, in order to determine whether such laws remain appropriate or require modification given modern communication and travel capabilities. (Resolution adopted at the 2001 Plenum) The JCPA supports a 1985 amendment that allows citizens of the District of Columbia voting representation in Congress. (Joint Program Plan, 1984-1985)

### **Transatlantic Slave Trade**

The JCPA recognizes the importance of the need to acknowledge and address the barbarity of the transatlantic slave trade. We pledge to examine, with our national and local member agencies and with our coalition partners, the nature of the African American community’s concern for national and

international responses to the lingering effects of slavery and to determine how the Jewish community should respond. At the same time, we commit to working with partners to ensure that the anti-racism movement is not misused to advance an agenda that targets Israel and promotes anti-Semitism, as was the case during the UN World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa. (Resolution adopted at the 2002 Plenum)

### **African American Heritage**

In light of continuing racial tension in our nation, as well as widespread societal ignorance of African-American history and culture, there is a critical need for more comprehensive presentation, preservation, and recognition of the contributions of African-Americans within American society. The JCPA resolves to support efforts to acknowledge the fundamental injustice and inhumanity of slavery in the United States; memorialize, in the nation's capital, the lives of those who suffered and perished as a consequence of slavery in the United States; and promote cultural understanding of African American heritage to further enhance social justice and racial harmony. Furthermore, it resolves to seek a greater understanding of these historical realities of American society by working in coalition with other religious, racial, and ethnic groups in supporting the establishment of memorials, museums, and monuments that promote cultural understanding, social justice, and racial harmony; and commemorate the decision of the Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education* by encouraging and promoting educational programs for adults and the development of a curriculum in schools, to address the issues raised in this resolution. (Resolution adopted at the 2004 Plenum)

## **LABOR**

### **The Right to Form Unions and Bargain Collectively**

The JCPA believes that collective bargaining is a vital public good that makes for a more just, fair, open and democratic society and workers should not be impeded in their efforts to organize. The National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), enacted by Congress in 1935, remains an essential cornerstone of workers rights, setting forth fair procedures for collective bargaining, prohibiting employers from discriminating against employees who take part in union or collective activities, requiring employers to bargain with the appointed representative of its employees, regulating what tactics each side may employ to further their bargaining objectives, and establishing procedural guidelines on good faith bargaining.

Therefore, the Community Relations field should work with members of the Congress so that U.S. law will allow workers to freely choose unions without interference, threats or coercion; establish strong penalties when employees' rights to organize and bargain are violated, including timely injunctive relief and meaningful monetary damages. The field should also support efforts of local unions and workers in their efforts to secure better working conditions for themselves and their co-workers, in accordance with long standing principles of Jewish community relations. (Resolution adopted at the 2004 Plenum)

## **WOMEN'S ISSUES**

### **Right to Reproductive Choice**

The JCPA supports a woman's legal right to reproductive choice and to adequately funded family planning programs in the U.S. and abroad. We condemn acts of violence directed at those who seek or provide these services (Agenda 2000-2001). The JCPA believes medical education, affected by controversy around this issue, is failing to provide adequate opportunity for doctors to obtain the skills needed to perform this legal medical procedure. Residency curricula in obstetrics/gynecology should make available instruction in all procedures relating to reproductive functions, whether or not the resident-in-training incorporates these procedures into the future practice of medicine (Agenda 1999-2000). We oppose statutes requiring pregnant minors to notify or obtain the consent of their parents or

obtain judicial consent or bypasses prior to obtaining an abortion; we support federal and state legislation to provide abortion funding for those unable to pay (JPP 1992-1993).

The JCPA believes that: reproductive health decisions are best made by individuals in consultation with their families and health care professionals based on personal religious beliefs; and, Restrictions on the right to choose and lack of access to services threaten this constitutionally-protected individual right.

The community relations field should: oppose any efforts to deny a woman's right to reproductive choice, including any efforts to deny access to birth control; Oppose efforts to restrict a woman's ability to access reproductive health services; and, Support efforts to safeguard *Roe v. Wade*. (Resolution adopted at the 2005 Plenum)

**DISSENT:** The Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America (UOJCA) does not, as a matter of longstanding policy, join the Jewish Council for Public Affairs Agenda discussion of "reproductive choice." We cannot endorse a public policy that does not reflect the complex response of halacha (Jewish law) to the abortion issue. In most circumstances the halacha proscribes abortion, but there are cases in which halacha permits and indeed mandates abortion. The question is a sensitive one and personal decisions in this area should be made in consultation with recognized halachic authorities.

### **Violence Against Women, Sexual Harassment, and Discrimination**

The JCPA supports reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act and other measures to provide services to individuals and children affected by domestic violence, including passage and implementation of the Family Violence Option by the individual states (Agenda 2000-2001). We support policies to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace and urge the adoption by member agencies and others of sexual harassment policies consistent with the JCPA Model Sexual Harassment Policy adopted in June 1992 (JPP 1992-1993). We support U.S. ratification of the U.N. Convention to Eliminate Discrimination Against Women (JPP 1996-1997).

### **Advancing Women's Rights**

The Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA) urges the United States to ratify the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), a landmark Convention that has been ratified by 168 countries, including Israel. (Resolution Adopted in February 2002).

### **Human Trafficking**

The JCPA believes that the demand for and apparatus that facilitates the movement of modern-day slaves around the world must be eliminated; human trafficking is a crime that harms millions of victims worldwide; and that, the public should be alerted to the risks involved with it and work with the American government and United Nations to combat trafficking.

The JCPA and its member agencies should advocate for consistent and comprehensive state and federal anti-trafficking laws that provide for criminal penalties for traffickers as well as protection and rehabilitation for victims; support President Bush's decision to raise the issue of human trafficking in the United Nations and for leaders of the world to work together to end it; support the State Department's efforts to curtail the demand for human trafficking and to work extensively with governments on action plans for prevention of human trafficking; support the State Department's efforts with Tier 2 and Tier 3 countries, and any country that demonstrates immediate and obvious violations not recognized in the previous year's TIP report; encourage local and state law enforcement and prosecutorial agencies to prosecute the traffickers and protect the victims; and, join in coalition with other groups offering advocacy and assistance to the victims of trafficking. (Adopted at 2006 Plenum)

## **OTHER**

### **Civic Engagement and Volunteerism**

The JCPA, recognizing the need in our nation for increased civic engagement, will encourage greater efforts, through its national and local member agencies, to engage volunteers and promote civic involvement, including direct service volunteering such as mentoring and tutoring, advocacy on issues of public policy and grass-roots community organizing (Resolution adopted at the 1999 Plenum).

### **Non-Profit Sector**

The JCPA believes further restrictions on the advocacy role of charitable nonprofits are unnecessary and would harm the important advocacy role that nonprofits play. Existing restrictions under Section 501(c) of the IRS code allow for adequate oversight of tax exempt organizations ensuring that such activities do not extend beyond the “substantial amount” limit in current law; Additional limitations on donor-advised funds, such as increased administrative or financial requirements, or a limitation on “board-size” or governance structure, are not necessary; and that the tax code should be modified to allow more Americans to benefit from incentives for charitable contributions including deductions for non-itemizers, to remove disincentives arising from the application of the alternative minimum tax, and to add provisions to allow an individual to make donations that are not subject to income tax directly from their individual retirement accounts to a charity. (adopted 2006 Plenum).