

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Cleveland
Policy on Statements/Endorsements for Justice

INTRODUCTION

The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Cleveland (hereinafter referred to as UUCC) is a liberal religious congregation bound together by our love for each other, our commitment to social justice, and our fidelity to the principles of Unitarian Universalism. Our mission calls us to put into action our faith's principles by addressing conditions and situations of social and economic injustice within our congregation and in the larger community.

I. APPROACHES TO SOCIAL ACTION

The Unitarian Universalist Association (hereinafter referred to as the UUA) identifies five (5) main approaches to social justice work. They are as follows:

1. **Service.** This is action taken with the goal of meeting the needs of a person (s) in distress by providing them with money, clothing, food, shelter, medical care, or other necessities.
1. **Education.** This is action taken to inform people about the importance of a social issue and to frame that issue within the context of the liberal religious values expressed the foundational documents and principles of the UUA.
2. **Witness.** This is the action taken to make public through word or deed the conviction of an individual, group of individuals, or organization regarding a particular issue.

- 3. Advocacy.** This is action taken through the legislative and administrative processes or in the public square to influence an existing policy or to promote a new policy.
- 4. Community Organizing.** This is action taken to mobilize people in the community to help themselves through individual or collective action.

II. Actions by Individuals

Individuals are always free to speak for themselves. UUCC honors the right of individual conscience and individual members of UUCC are encouraged to engage in a free and responsible search for truth and meaning. Individual members may not speak for UUCC as a whole unless they have been specifically authorized by the Board of Trustees (hereinafter referred to as the Board) or its designee, such as the Minister.

For example, members at a meeting in the larger community may say that they are members of UUCC, describe their roles at UUCC, and state their own personal views, which they clearly identify as their own views. However, they may not commit UUCC to a particular action or position unless they have received prior authorization from UUCC or the Board. Members also may not state their own views on an issue and imply that these views represent those of UUCC as an organization.

III. Actions by Committees

Established and recognized committees of UUCC shall act in their own names. One or more members of a UUCC committee may be chosen to represent the committee in public forums or actions. Members of a committee may vote to take a position on an issue. Committees may make public their position by clearly stating that, for example,

the _____ Committee of UUCC has the following position on an issue. The banner or sign of the committee may be carried at rallies, marches, demonstrations, or other events. These positions may not include the endorsement or support of candidates for office whether partisan or nonpartisan.

A committee of UUCC shall not take a position endorsing a political candidate. To be clear, “political candidate” means candidates who run with the designation of political party. However it also means candidates who run in elections that are nonpartisan, such as some municipal elections and most judicial elections.

Neither UUCC or any committee of UUCC may permit political campaigning or political rallies to be held on the property of the Congregation. In addition, no member, UUCC committee or outside individual may leave or distribute literature supporting any candidate for public office whether partisan or nonpartisan.

However, candidates, political officeholders, or political groups may, through established UUCC procedures, reserve a meeting space on UUCC property for the expressed purpose of holding a nonpartisan meeting.

IV. Actions by the Congregation

Any UUCC member or staff person in the employ of UUCC may initiate a proposal for a statement of UUCC on an issue. The initiator shall follow these steps:

1. The initiator shall present the idea to one or more social justice committees of UUCC.
2. If none of the social justice committees agrees to sponsor the idea, the initiator may take the idea to any of the other committees or *ad hoc* groups within UUCC.
3. As an alternative, the initiator may put together his/her/ their own group of at least five (5) UUCC members in order to prepare the idea for presentation to the Board of UUCC.
4. The proposal to be prepared by the committee or sponsoring group for presentation to the UUCC Board shall address ALL of the following questions:
 - A. What is the issue to be addressed through a statement/endorsement by UUCC?
 - B. Why is action by UUCC requested at this time?
 - C. How would making a statement/endorsement further the mission of UUCC?
 - D. What is the statement/endorsement that UUCC would be asked to make?
 - E. Are any related actions by UUCC required?
 - F. How will the sponsoring group inform the Congregation of the issue at stake?
5. The sponsoring group will submit the proposal to the UUCC Board. If the Board decides that the requested statement/endorsement is contrary to UUCC mission and principles, the Board or its designee shall work with the sponsoring group to revise the proposal. If the Board and the

sponsoring group cannot agree on a mutually-satisfactory revision, the Board shall not forward the proposal to the congregation.

6. If the Board approves the proposal, it will schedule at least one (1) Congregational meeting to discuss the proposal. This meeting shall be held not later than one (1) month following the Board's approval of the proposal. The Board and the sponsoring group shall make available adequate information two (2) weeks before the meeting so that the Congregation can make an informed decision on the issue.

7. At the Congregational meeting, the UUCC Board president or his/her/ their designee shall act as presiding officer with members of the sponsoring group on hand to answer questions about the proposal. The following agenda at the meeting will be followed unless those in attendance elect to modify this agenda with a supermajority vote of 67%. The agenda is as follows:

A. The presiding officer will direct sponsoring group to address the following questions:

- (1) What is the problem or condition that the requested action is meant to address?
- (2) What is the specific plan of action?
- (3) Why is Congregational action needed at this time?
- (4) What are the positive and negative consequences of a UUCC statement/endorsement?

B. The presiding officer will then take the following steps:

(1) Direct the sponsoring group to answer questions of clarification by members of UUCC who are at the meeting.

(2) Allow equal time for supporters and opponents to express their views on the proposal in question.

C. Following this exchange of views, the presiding officer will take the following steps;

(1) Ascertain that a quorum of twenty percent (20%) of the eligible voting members of UUCC are present.

(2) Ask for a vote to call the question. A vote to call the question must receive a supermajority of sixty-seven percent (67%).

(3) If the motion passes then the Congregation will vote on the question of whether or not the UUCC will make a statement/endorsement on the issue in question as well as any actions that this may require. A supermajority of 67% will be required for the proposal to pass.

(4) With the passage of the proposal, the Board shall take all necessary steps to publicize the UUCC statement/endorsement on the issue and to comply with any actions that were part of the proposal.

(4) If the vote to call the question fails to garner 67% support among UUCC members at the meeting, then the presiding officer will call for one of two motions from the floor of the meeting:

(a) A motion to “table to a time certain” shall mean that either more information is needed to make a decision or that more discussion is needed. This motion may pass by a simple majority vote of those present. It shall direct the UUCC Board to call a second Congregational meeting at which a final and binding vote will be taken on whether or not to endorse the proposal.

(b) A motion to “table once and for all” shall mean that the proposal is rejected and no further action shall be taken. This motion may pass by a simple majority of those present.

(c) Both of these “tabling” motions shall be considered procedural motions and discussion of the motions shall not be required.

Adopted by the Board of Trustees 11/23/2021