

The following is the result of the Social Action Committee's work on how to handle political nonpartisan issues that come before the board, our committee, and the Rabbi. We based our document on a URJ booklet called "Taking A Stand" and have Rabbi Enger's approval of our version.

Submitted by Debbie Raas and Linda Hirsh, approved by board Sept. 2010

## Taking a Stand on Public Policy

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Judaism stands on three legs: Torah, lifelong Jewish Learning; Avodah, Worship and Ritual; and G'milut Chasadim, Acts of Righteousness. Through these three pillars we all become better Jews.

The rationale for taking a stand as a synagogue community is twofold: first, Judaism offers insight and teaching about significant issues of our time; second, as a synagogue community, Jewish tradition sometimes demands that we speak out within our community and in the larger community.

Issues may range from public safety to world events. The question that we hope to answer is: what process do we use to deal with these issues?

The process

A congregant or the rabbi brings an issue to the board, rabbi or social action committee.

If time is of the essence, the board or a representative group (executive committee) should act immediately.

If there is enough time for extended study, the board and rabbi and the social action committee itself will work together to study the issue through a Jewish Perspective.

The next step is to educate the entire congregation. Source material will be used to determine Jewish values that apply to the issue, unique Jewish viewpoints, relationship or impact on the congregation, any current project that could enhance the issue.

The board at this point might vote on a statement in support of a policy or direct the social action committee to help the congregation write letters, make calls, have petitions to sign, wear buttons, or advocate as a group. If there is no consensus but 2/3 of the board believes action should be taken the action will go ahead, As always, individuals are able to opt out of a decision.

The resources available to our community include URJ policies adopted in the past and the URJ's Religious Action Center. We would also look at resources from the non Jewish community.

Secular Law states that we cannot support a political candidate or a party, but we can support an issue