

## WOMEN'S ISSUES COMMITTEE

### HISTORY

While NEA's history of committees, commissions, and councils concerned with issues affecting women within the Association, within the workplace, and within society as a whole dates back to at least 1907, the most immediate and relevant precursor to today's Standing Advisory Committee on Women's Issues was the 1978 establishment of the Special Committee on Women's Leadership Training. On June 29<sup>th</sup> of that year, the NEA Executive Committee adopted a motion *"To authorize the President to appoint a special committee of nine (9), with a multi-ethnic balance, for the following purposes: 1. To develop, monitor, and implement the existing Women's Leadership Training program, and 2. To make recommendations for future programs that will promote women's leadership within the UTP [United Teaching Profession]."*

This Special Committee was formally established in September 1978. In May of 1979, the NEA Executive Committee extended the committee's duration for another two years and it expanded the committee's charges to include monitoring women's leadership programs within the Association, monitoring and proposing programs and policies affecting sex equity, and acting as the review committee for the "Leadership Training for Multicultural Sex Equity in NEA" program.

In February of the following year, a proposal was brought to the NEA Board of Directors to establish a broader special committee on women's concerns. The Board referred this proposal to the Special Committee on Women's Leadership Training for its assessment. In response, that committee made several recommendations, including renaming the Special Committee on Women's Leadership Training and expanding its charges to address women's concerns about such issues as employment, education, legislation and curriculum.

At its April 1, 1980, session, the NEA Executive Committee requested that the Executive Director review, analyze, and make further recommendations regarding the Association's efforts to respond to the special concerns of women; that an assessment of the recommendations of the Special Committee on Women's Leadership Training be included; and that his recommendation should not exclude the possibility of a women's coordinator in Teacher Rights.

The Executive Committee subsequently reviewed both the Special Committee on Women's Leadership Training proposals and the report of the Executive Director and voted to recommend to the Board of Directors the establishment of a Special Committee on Women's Concerns.

The Board approved the Executive Committee's recommendation on May 3, 1980. It reauthorized the Special Committee in 1982 for an additional two years and then again in 1984 for another two-year period. During this time, the Special Committee on Women's Concerns monitored, advised, and made recommendations in such areas as sex equity, pay equity, sexual harassment, teenage pregnancy, leadership development and training, and legislation related to equal rights under the law.

In April of 1986, the NEA Executive Committee recommended that the Special Committee be made permanent and that it become the Standing Committee on Women's Concerns. The NEA Board of Directors concurred with this recommendation and submitted a New Business Item to the 1986 Representative Assembly to implement it. That New Business Item (NBI 1986-B) read:

*The 1986 NEA Representative Assembly establishes the standing Committee on Women's Concerns with the following responsibilities: The Standing Committee on Women's Concerns recommends policies relative to multicultural sex equity and other issues of concern to women with a particular focus on necessary congressional and state initiatives to achieve the goal of equal rights under the law for women. The committee monitors the content and delivery of the Women's Leadership Training Program and advises the president and the governing bodies on the implementation of NEA programs to promote women's rights. It serves as part of the review process of NEA's national media campaign materials. The committee transmits to the president and executive director relevant data for planning purposes.*

The RA adopted this New Business Item on July 3, 1986. The committee was formally established on September 1 and was given its initial set of charges in keeping with the NBI by the NEA Executive Committee on September 22.

In 1992, the NEA Special Committee on Organizational Streamlining recommended that the Women's Issues Committee be one of three Advisory Standing Committees to be made up of 13 members, each with an allowable tenure the same as for members of the Strategic Objective Standing Committees – i.e., a life-time limit of two three-year terms, coterminous with the terms of the appointing President, for each committee. The Board concurred with this recommendation and it was presented to the 1992 Representative Assembly as part of the Streamlining Report.

The charges given WIC following Streamlining continued to expand. For example, the 1993-1994 charges included monitoring implementation of the multicultural Action Plan for Sex Equity, the Women's Leadership Development Program and the UniServ Affirmative Action Program; assessing and making recommendations regarding sexual harassment in education; reviewing the status of the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women; reviewing NEA national media campaign materials; developing the selection process for participants in the NEA Campaigning to Win training; recommending ways to expand and develop the Women's Leadership Training Program; and cooperating with the Minority Affairs Committee in planning for the annual Joint Conference on Concerns of Minorities and Women.

The Committee has continued to receive similar and expanded charges each year since that time.