

VERMONT STATE GRANGE RESOLUTIONS—2018

AGRICULTURE/ENVIRONMENT

Resolution #1 Opposition to Prophylactic use of Neonicotinoids

Submitted by: Caledonia Grange #9 and Kingdom Pomona #35

WHEREAS: insect pollinators are critical to healthy ecosystems and contribute \$29 billion a year to U.S. farm income, and

WHEREAS: pollinator populations are in decline, and once common species of bees have become rare, endangered, or extinct, and

WHEREAS: neonicotinoids are being used in the State of Vermont and nationally for commercial agriculture, but there is no (or little) research available on how these chemicals affect bee populations in the long term by accumulating in plant nectar, bee hives, water and soil, and

WHEREAS: the European Union has permanently banned the outdoor use of neonicotinoid pesticides because of their negative impact on pollinators, and

WHEREAS: the provinces of Ontario and Quebec, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service, and states of Maryland and Connecticut have all put restrictions on the use of neonicotinoids, and

WHEREAS: in 2017, the legislatively-created Vermont Pollinator Protection Committee recommended: Classifying all pesticides that contain neonicotinoid active ingredients as restricted use products; imposing a statewide moratorium on applications of neonicotinoids to ornamental plants accessible to pollinators; and establishing a policy that pesticides used in Vermont should be based on need, not use prophylactically, therefore be it

RESOLVED: that the Vermont State Grange go on record in opposition to the prophylactic use of neonicotinoids, and be it further

RESOLVED: that the Vermont State Grange support statewide legislation requiring seed dealers to provide the option of untreated seeds for agricultural use and designating neonicotinoids as restricted use chemicals, which can only be applied by trained applicators, and be it further

RESOLVED: that the National Grange support the establishment of an independent national laboratory at the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) responsible for testing pesticides and reporting the EPA test results and be it further

RESOLVED: that the National Grange support CLEAR labeling of ALL products containing neonicotinoids based on EPA test results as to their adverse effects to pollinators.

Action: Resolution approved as rewritten

Resolution #2 Endangered Species Act

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Submitted by: Caledonia Grange #9

WHEREAS: the Endangered Species Act (ESA), passed in 1973, has brought species such as the bald eagle and the Yellowstone grizzly bear back from the edge of extinction and has kept 99% of listed species from going extinct, and

WHEREAS: the Act is an essential component of conserving a healthy and vibrant environment for future generations, and

WHEREAS: the Department of the Interior is proposing changes to weaken the Act by making it easier to approve roads and pipelines, which could harm species covered under the Act, and

WHEREAS: the Department is also proposing changes to make it more difficult to protect “threatened” species that are declining and may become “endangered” in the future, therefore be it

RESOLVED: that the Vermont State Grange and the National Grange go on record in opposition to weakening the Endangered Species Act. The Grange will contact members of Congress and encourage individual Grange members to contact their congressional delegations, to oppose any weakening to the Endangered Species Act.

Action: Resolution approved as rewritten

Resolution #3 Purity of Maple Syrup and Honey

Submitted by: Cobble Hill Grange #453

WHEREAS: the Food and Drug Administration proposes to require “sugar added” to labels on maple syrup and honey, and

WHEREAS: these products are pure and natural and have no need for such labeling, therefore be it

RESOLVED: that the Grange opposes any regulation requiring “sugar added” to maple syrup or honey labels, and be it further

RESOLVED: that this resolution be submitted for consideration by the National Grange in November.

Action: Resolution approved

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GOOD OF THE ORDER

Resolution #4 Updating the Language of the Grange Obligation

Submitted by: Caledonia Grange #9

WHEREAS: the language of the Grange Obligation is outdated in its reference to secret work, and

WHEREAS: modern day people are confused by being asked to swear on their sacred honor to keep secrets when there are none to be kept, and

WHEREAS: the historical reason for any secrecy (anecdotally to screen out infiltrators from the railroad companies) no longer exists in present-day Grange, and

WHEREAS: it wastes a lot of time explaining all this to prospective new members, and makes quite a few prospective members decide they don't want to join up after all, and

WHEREAS: this sort of language perpetuates the idea that Grange is a secret society, which is not the case, and which perception is, in fact, a drag on the very future of Grange, and

WHEREAS: it is imperative that Grange stay current with the population in the country if it wants to remain truly relevant, and question and up-date Grange traditions that no longer serve a purpose, therefore be it

RESOLVED: that the wording of the Obligation be edited to exclude phrases suggestive of secrecy and be it further

RESOLVED: that all language in the Grange manual be examined and considered for updating, and to be sure that the language is truly reflecting what Grange is today.

Action: Resolution rejected

Resolution #5 Continue Education Grants

Submitted by: Bridport Grange #303 and Champlain Valley Pomona Grange #37

WHEREAS: Grants to Grangers started as a pilot program in March 2017, and it does take time for all Grangers to hear about them, and

WHEREAS: the application is on the Vermont State Grange Website (www.vtstategrange.org) and will be included in the July 2018 Program Book, therefore be it

RESOLVED: that the Educational Aid continue the grant program for a minimum of two more years to better access the benefit of this program.

Action: Resolution approved

Resolution #6 Monetary Funds to Be Sent to Treasurer

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Submitted by: Poultney Valley Grange #533 and New Horizons Pomona Grange #33

WHEREAS: some Community Granges receive monetary funds from the State Grange either in the form of interest or loans, and the funds are very important for financial operation of said Community Grange, and

WHEREAS: the checks are presently being sent to the Master of that Community Grange, who may not see the Treasurer of said Community Grange until the next meeting, therefore be it

RESOLVED: that monetary funds from the State Grange either in the form of interest or loans to Community Granges be sent to the Treasurer at his/her address so that the funds can be deposited into the account on a timely basis, so the financial obligations can be met, and the State Grange can reconcile their account on a timely basis.

Action: Resolution rejected

Resolution #18 Family Camp

Submitted by: New Horizons Pomona #33

WHEREAS: Family Camp Weekend requires a lot of planning, and

WHEREAS: the Lady Assistant and the Assistant Steward find it hard to put the time into said planning unless they live in the same town, therefore be it

RESOLVED: that the State Master appoint a chairman, who will appoint a committee to help him or her with the planning and putting on of Family Camp Weekend.

Action: Resolution Rejected

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HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE

Resolution #7 Transparency in Medical Charges

Submitted by: Caledonia Grange #9 and Kingdom Pomona #35

WHEREAS: medical bills are the foremost cause of personal bankruptcy in the United States, and

WHEREAS: the uncertainty and fear of substantive charges for office visits and medical tests, and not knowing how much will be covered by insurance, can cause some people to forego critical tests or put off an office visit, which can lead to further complications, more severe illness, and even death, and

WHEREAS: the pain of receiving the bill for services is oftentimes greater than the pain that drove you to the doctor's in the first place, and

WHEREAS: the consumer's financial responsibility for medical tests, procedures, and treatment varies widely based on type and kind of coverage for individual health care, and

WHEREAS: pricing for non-emergency standard medical tests, procedures, and treatments vary widely between different clinics, hospitals, medical labs, and private medical offices, and

WHEREAS: publication of standardized pricing for standard medical tests, procedures, and treatments by providers could allow consumers to compare their individual cost when considering where to seek services, therefore be it

RESOLVED: that the Vermont State Grange and the National Grange go on record in calling for publication to inform consumers of the current costs for standard medical tests, procedures, and treatments (barring complications) offered by the provider, in places easily accessible to the potential consumer(s), and be it further

RESOLVED: that the Vermont State Grange and the National Grange contact members of Congress and encourage individual Grange members to contact their congressional delegations in support of publication of the consumer's right to understand their cost for services.

Action: Resolution Rejected

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- WHEREAS: the selection of Tuesday in the week was originally to accommodate agriculturalists in an era when most people farmed, which is no longer the case, and
- WHEREAS: many citizens are unable to get time off from work or cannot afford to take unpaid time off of work to attend the traditional Town Meeting, and
- WHEREAS: participation in Town Meeting is flagging, and voter turnout is down, particularly among younger citizens, and
- WHEREAS: it is in the interest of our democracy that every citizen has an opportunity to take part in local government and feel they have a voice, therefore be it
- RESOLVED: that Vermont Town Meeting Day be moved to a weekend, and be it further
- RESOLVED: that Vermont State Grange recommend to National Grange that all states adopt similar Town Meeting Days in their states.

Action: Resolution Rejected

Resolution #11 Support National Passage of the Equal Right Amendment

Submitted by: Caledonia Grange #9 and Kingdom Pomona Grange #35

- WHEREAS: one of the founding precepts of the Grange was that women were welcomed into the organization as equal members to men and that the Grange has a long history of promoting the welfare of women and recognizing and honoring their essential role and contributions in agriculture and virtually every other field in our nation, and
- WHEREAS: the Equal Rights Amendment (E.R.A) will require that rights guaranteed by the Constitution apply equally to all persons regardless of their sex, and
- WHEREAS: women in the U.S. continue to earn substantially less compared to men while doing the same job (the national ratio in 2015 was \$0.82 to \$1.00, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics), and
- WHEREAS: the E.R.A would guarantee that women be paid at the same rate as paid to men for the same job, and
- WHEREAS: the U.S. is one of only six countries in the world that have not ratified the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, adopted by the United Nations in 1979 (the other abstaining countries being Iran, Palau, Somalia, Sudan, and Tonga (South Sudan signed on in 2015), and
- WHEREAS: the E.R.A. would ensure that laws providing protection against discrimination against women are comprehensive and not merely limited to workplaces with 15 or more employees, as currently defined by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, and

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WHEREAS: the E.R.A. would require employers to make reasonable accommodations for pregnant women in the workplace, in the say way that employers are required to make reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities, and

WHEREAS: Illinois became the 37th state to sign on to ratify the E.R.A. in May of 2018, and 38 states being required to create an amendment, the vote of only one more state will be required for the E.R.A. to be considered ratified into law, and

WHEREAS: there is no hard and fast rule as to the period of time within which ratification must take place and no expiration date or deadline in the process, and there is precedent in the U.S. for an amendment taking over 200 years to become accepted law*, and

WHEREAS: it would be most fitting for the National Grange to take a stand and vocally espouse equal rights for women, whether through support for the current E.R.A. process or through support for similar nationwide legislation, therefore be it

RESOLVED: that the National Grange commit to establishing legal equality for women in the U.S.A. by actively supporting and advocating for passage of the Equal Rights Amendment in every State in the Union and be it further

RESOLVED: that the National Grange urge the U.S. Congress to ratify the worldwide Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

*The 27th Amendment, which states that salary increases for members of Congress may not go into effect until the term after they were approved, was first proposed by James Madison in the 1700's, and slowly acquired states' votes for over 200 years, before being ratified by Michigan in 1992, upon which vote it became law. NYT May 31, 2018

Action: Resolution Rejected

Resolution #12 Moving National Election Day to the Weekend

Submitted by: Caledonia Grange #9

WHEREAS: the percentage of citizens voting in the US continues to decline (53.6% in 2012, and the US ranks 120th out of 169 countries in voter participation), and

WHEREAS: a weekend voting day could boost turnout numbers, and

WHEREAS: greater participation in national voting will lead to more accurate representation and civic engagement, and

WHEREAS: Election Day in the United State has been scheduled on a Tuesday since 1845, a decision based on convenience when the USA was an agrarian society, and farmers needed a day to travel to the polls, a day to vote, and a day to get back, all without interfering with religious rituals or 'market day' (according to the non-profit "Why Tuesday", and

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WHEREAS: the USA is joined only by Israel, Grenada, and Danish Realm in holding their national elections on a Tuesday, and

WHEREAS: the majority of nations worldwide hold their national elections on a weekend day, therefore be it

RESOLVED: that the Vermont State Grange and National Grange endorse moving Election Day to weekends.

Action: Resolution Rejected

Resolution #13 Raising the Federal Minimum Wage

Submitted by: Caledonia Grange #9 and Kingdom Pomona Grange #35

WHEREAS: many full-time working people find they are not making enough money to pay their bills, and

WHEREAS: many citizens are working so many hours that they are too tired to spend quality time with family or stay involved with civic activities or attend meetings to the benefit of their communities, and

WHEREAS: the current federal minimum wage is just \$7.25 per hour, and

WHEREAS: if the federal minimum wage had kept up with increases in worker productivity and inflation, in 2012 it would have been \$21.72 an hour (Pew Research Center), therefore be it

RESOLVED: that both the Vermont State Grange and the National Grange support increasing the Federal Minimum Wage to a minimum of \$12 per hour.

Action: Resolution approved

Resolution #14 Congressional Health Care Benefits

Submitted by: Bridport Grange #303 and Champlain Valley Pomona Grange #37

WHEREAS: members of Congress vote on the Health Care Benefits that affect many Americans, and

WHEREAS: they might understand the problems of obtaining and affording health care if they had to utilize the publicly available health care plans, therefore be it

RESOLVED: that the Vermont State Grange support legislation that would remove health care insurance funding as a benefit to Congressional employees, Senators, or Representatives.

Action: Resolution Rejected

Resolution #15 Public Smoking of Marijuana

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Submitted by: Cobble Hill Grange #453 and Heart of Vermont Pomona #34

WHEREAS: virtually all restrictions and prohibitions in Vermont law about smoking in public places specifically mention only tobacco or other nicotine delivery devices, and

WHEREAS: the list of such public places is extensive and includes:

- Common areas of multi-unit housing
- Buildings and offices
- Means of transportation
- Common carrier waiting rooms, like bus stations
- Arcades, libraries, theaters, concert halls, auditoriums, arenas, shopping malls, etc.
- Restaurants, bars, and cabarets, including private clubs and bars
- Retail and grocery stores
- All areas of hotels and motels, including lobbies, guest quarters, hallways, elevators, restaurants, restrooms and cafeterias
- Buildings or facilities owned or operated by social, fraternal, or religious clubs
- Common areas of nursing homes and hospitals and all grounds of any State-owned or operated hospital or residential recovery facility
- Within 25 feet of all State-owned buildings and offices, excepting areas not owned by the State
- Indoor places or portions of places that are owned, leased, or rented by state, county or municipal governments or by agencies supported by taxes
- Grounds of public schools and at school sponsored events
- Licensed childcare centers at all times and by all persons
- In cars when a child in a car seat or booster is present, and

WHEREAS: one of the common reasons behind such laws is protection of the general public from second hand smoke, and

WHEREAS: no such prohibitions are included in the 2018 marijuana law (in fact, the law, V.S.A. 18, Sec. 4230 et seq., only deals with possession and cultivation, sale, trafficking), and

WHEREAS: to many people, second hand smoke from marijuana is as offensive, if not more so, as that from tobacco, therefore be it

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RESOLVED: that the Vermont State Grange urges the legislature to add the prohibition of smoking marijuana to all Vermont laws dealing with Smoking in Public Places.

Action: Resolution Rejected

Resolution #16 Rental Housing Registry

Submitted by: Blue Spruce Grange #574, Beacon Light Grange #557, and Champlain Valley Pomona Grange #37

WHEREAS: some Vermont rental housing is some of the oldest in the country, and

WHEREAS: the current system of code enforcement is not keeping up with the slow degradation of that property, and

WHEREAS: eight years ago, a study group asked Vermont lawmakers to set up a central rental housing office in state government, create a rental housing registry, and take other proactive steps to ensure safety for tenants, and

WHEREAS: the Legislature was urged to not let this drop, but to continue to implement the Committee's recommendations, and

WHEREAS: these recommendations were dropped by the Legislature, and

WHEREAS: under Vermont's rental housing health code, property owners are held to a set of basic requirements, and

WHEREAS: many landlords do try to adhere to the basic recommendations, many do not, therefore be it

RESOLVED: that the Vermont State Grange supports the creation of a Rental Housing Registry with the authority to work with landlords and tenants, and be it further

RESOLVED: that a copy of this resolution be submitted to the proper agency in Montpelier.

Action: Resolution Rejected

Resolution #19 Legislature Called Back into Session

Submitted by: New Horizons Pomona #33

WHEREAS: the Legislative work is supposed to end on the 15th of May, and

WHEREAS: they seem to drag their feet getting things done, therefore be it

RESOLVED: that if the Legislature is called back to finish the work they should have done, they should not be paid for the extra time.

Action: No action taken; already policy

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TAXATION

Resolution #17 Reduce State Income Tax on Social Security

Submitted by: Blue Spruce Grange #574, Beacon Light Grange #557, and Champlain Valley Pomona Grange #37

WHEREAS: Vermont is one of four states that taxes Social Security at the same income level as the Federal Government, and

WHEREAS: individuals with an annual income of more than \$25,000 and couples with more than \$32,000 face state taxes on their benefits, and

WHEREAS: these thresholds have not increased in nearly 30 years, despite inflation, and

WHEREAS: about 145,000 Vermonters receive Social Security and paid almost \$30 million in state taxes in 2013 (according to the Vermont Legislative Joint Fiscal Office),
therefore be it

RESOLVED: that the Vermont State Grange go on record as supporting legislative action to reduce state income taxes on Social Security for Vermonters, and be it further

RESOLVED: that a copy of this resolution be submitted to the proper Department in Montpelier.

Action: Resolution approved

RESOLUTIONS AS A RESPONSE TO MASTER'S ADDRESS

Resolution # 20 Special Deputy

RESOLVED: that the VT State Grange Master along with the VT State Grange Executive Committee appoint a "Special Deputy". This "Special Deputy" would assist the Granges "at Risk" with their record keeping, Grange format, etc. This "Special Deputy" will report to the Master and the Executive Committee.

Action: Resolution approved

Resolution # 21 Whole Milk in School Meal Programs

RESOLVED: that the National Grange go on record in support of the return of whole milk in the school breakfast and lunch programs.

Action: Resolution approved