

CSW Alert!



The Power of We • Spokane 2019

Friday, June 21, 2019

Today's schedule includes the Debate and Vote on the Democracy Uncorrupted SOC and electronic voting on AIW preferences.

SOC – Our Democracy Uncorrupted – 2016-2019

Draft Statement of Conscience (SOC)

TODAY, General Session - Debate and Vote on SOC – 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

The revised draft SOC and the list of unincorporated amendments start on page 2.

ACTIONS of IMMEDIATE WITNESS

Delegates may vote for up to three ACTIONS OF IMMEDIATE WITNESS (AIW) proposals. The UUA by-laws allow a General Assembly to affirm no more than three AIWs.

1. Before you vote, review the criteria for AIWs at <https://www.uua.org/action/process/guide/aiw/criteria>
2. Read all the AIW proposals. Find the proposals at
 - <https://form.jotform.com/UUA/aiw>, or
 - on the GA app, or
 - at the CSW booth (#243).
3. Discuss the issues among other delegates or among your congregation members, or, really, anyone you can find with whom to process your deliberations.
4. Cast your votes! To vote you will need your GA Registration ID number. ONSITE delegates will find this number just above the bar code on your GA badge; OFFSITE delegates may find this number on the bottom of the left side navigation menu. You can vote for up to three (3) AIW proposals at:
 - <https://form.jotform.com/UUA/aiw>, or
 - on the GA app, or
 - at the CSW booth (#243)

The deadline for voting is 2:00pm Pacific Time on Saturday June 22.

5. Attend the General Session that begins at 4:30pm on Saturday. At this General Session, the CSW will make a motion to admit the top three vote-getting AIW proposals to the agenda. If this motion passes, there will be discussion of the proposals, followed by voting on whether to affirm them.
6. Return to your congregation and spread the word on the AIWs affirmed and the Statement of Conscience adopted (if the delegates do adopt it) at GA 2019. Organize your congregation's actions in support of these positions.

Our Democracy Uncorrupted

*America begins in black plunder and white democracy,
two features that are not contradictory but complementary.*

-Ta-Nehisi Coates

Democracy in the United States has always been compromised. At the Nation's very founding, participation in governance was almost entirely limited to white male landowners. Wealth was created from those excluded: ~~the seizure of land~~ seized from indigenous peoples who were forcibly assimilated or removed and/or exterminated; and labor exploited from enslaved Africans, ~~and exploited labor from~~ indentured servants, immigrants, prisoners, the working poor, and women and children.

As people of faith committed to "the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large," we must continuously strive toward uncorrupted democracy. As a means to an end, democracy organizes decision-making among diverse people and preserves stability while balancing competing interests. But democracy is not merely a means. It is an end in itself, an ethical ideal, a moral and spiritual way of relating to one another. Sadly, many of our democratic institutions have been corrupted into being merely a means for giving powerful interests the appearance of legitimacy.

The promise of democracy is for a life that fashions us as the people we want to be. Terry Tempest Williams calls us to be resolute and courageous in our trust: "Can we be equitable? Can we be generous? Can we listen with our whole beings, not just our minds, and offer our attention rather than our opinions? And do we have enough resolve in our hearts to act courageously, relentlessly, without giving up – ever – trusting our fellow citizens to join with us in our determined pursuit of a living democracy?" ~~If democracy has sometimes seemed, as Winston Churchill said, "the worst form of government except for all those other forms," it is because democracy has been limited and constrained – merely a means for giving powerful interests the appearance of legitimacy.~~

Government by and for the people formally entails majority rule, with the majority's power limited by protection of the rights of those in the minority. Democratic government should include:

- universal voting rights with high voter participation rates;
- free, fair, competitive, and ~~frequent~~ regular elections;
- beyond voting, ~~widely used~~ accessible and meaningful channels of political participation open to all such as town meetings;
- access to accurate information and diverse media;
- policies and processes accountable to the voters, not to special interests;
- basic individual liberties that include freedom of religion, press and speech – including the right to engage in humanitarian aid, boycotts and divestment;
- leaders who reflect the racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, ability status, and class diversity of the population and who truly represent the people;
- an independent judiciary and adherence to the rule of law;
- policies implemented by those duly authorized
- freedom from influence of foreign or external powers ~~or corporate corruption~~; and

43 ● freedom from the undue influence of corporations and money.

44 Democracy is not only rules and systems, it is the culture and commitments of the people and of
45 those entrusted with carrying out the will of the people. A truly democratic culture requires:

- 46 ● transparency and radical inclusivity (intentional deep listening, attending to the concerns of
47 the most vulnerable, and caring about inclusion and exclusion);
- 48 ● cooperation, multi partisanship, and decision-making through consensus-building;
- 49 ● accountability and accessibility, being responsive to the public good versus special interests;
- 50 ● public officials being held to a high standard of ethical and fiduciary responsibility; and
- 51 ● respecting and defending for the rights and needs of those in the minority.

52 The Nation's founding documents expressed inspiring ideals of democratic equality. Unequal
53 valuation, however, has undermined our country's prospects for living the promise of true
54 democracy: white people are valued more than people of color, men more than women, the rich
55 more than the poor, cisgender and heterosexuals over LGBTQ+. These valuations, enshrined in
56 law and custom, amplify the power of the advantaged and the advantages of the powerful, and
57 continue to undercut our expressed ideals.

58 The 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments of 1865-1870, the 17th Amendment of 1913, the 19th
59 Amendment of 1920, and civil rights legislation in the 1960s represented expansions of voting
60 rights. Yet, our laws and systems continue to protect privilege and maintain value gaps. White
61 supremacist values and practices permeate America's the United States' 400-year history.
62 ~~Supremacist values~~ They continue today through policies that disproportionately lower voter
63 participation or distort representation among peoples of color, people with low income, ~~youth~~
64 young adults, people with disabilities and other disadvantaged people. Such policies include
65 denial of voting rights for people convicted of felonies, voter ID requirements, restrictions on
66 early voting opportunities and undercounting of non-citizens. In addition, gerrymandering limits
67 the electoral power of people of color and of less powerful political parties. It can also move
68 legislators further to the extremes, reducing their desire to cooperate or compromise.
69 The outsized influence of wealthy individuals and corporations on elections, always a corruption
70 of democracy, has worsened in recent decades. The costs of campaigning in the United States
71 have skyrocketed, increasing legislators' debt to large donors. ~~Over centuries, the~~ This outsized
72 impact of wealth among other factors has created a narrow two party system, excluding vibrant
73 progressive, socialist, and labor movements. Additionally, Supreme Court decisions struck down
74 attempts to limit the influence of money in politics: *Buckley v. Valeo* (1976) ruled that spending
75 is a protected form of speech, and *Citizens United* (2010) ruled that because corporations are
76 people, ~~and therefore~~ their campaign spending is protected free speech and may not be restricted.
77 ~~Understanding~~ Fixing our democracy requires examining how structural racism, sexism, money,
78 environmental exploitation, militarization, and other systemic forms of oppression ~~that~~ contribute
79 to accumulation of wealth and consolidation of political power.

80 At the Association level, Unitarian Universalists also fall short of democratic ideals. The cost
81 and time required to participate in our annual General Assembly exclude many from association-
82 level decision-making. Our ~~voting~~ business procedures sometimes limit important conversations.
83 The formal procedures often feel cumbersome; they are rooted in parliamentary rules that reflect
84 a competitive orientation. Informal procedures have not addressed the problem. Excluding

85 people of color from the creation of processes has distanced them from engagement. Informal
86 systems rely on organizational cultures that not everyone has knowledge of or is able to access.
87 Congregations vary in governance and decision-making processes. ~~from top-down and~~
88 ~~hierarchical to more egalitarian.~~ Our organizational styles vary from leader-oriented with defined
89 hierarchies to more collaborative leadership with changing roles. At both the Associational and
90 congregational levels, realizing true democracy requires expanding to include more diverse
91 voices.

92 **Theological/Religious Grounding**

93 *“We the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association covenant to affirm and*
94 *promote . . . the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our*
95 *congregations and in society at large.”*

96 Two phrases here warrant attention: *Within our congregations.* The 1648 Cambridge Platform
97 laid the foundation for Unitarian Universalist polity, establishing the autonomy of congregations.
98 Congregational polity puts democratic practice at the center of governance. Our shared religious
99 life depends on honoring every member’s voice and vote.

100 *Society at large.* Our religious commitments extend beyond our congregations’ walls. Excluding
101 our neighbors’ voices impoverishes our souls; hearing all voices expands our spirits. Our faith
102 calls us to live into the requirements of real democracy.

103 Our theology locates healing and wholeness in relationship, in contrast to a theology of sin that
104 sees human nature as fundamentally corrupt. Our tradition locates hope for addressing social
105 problems not in the suppression of basic sinfulness but in being open to diverse perspectives and
106 building connections. Another source of our religious movement is the Protestant Reformation’s
107 response to the corruption of a church that sold the promise of heaven for a price. Today ~~in our~~
108 ~~secular politics~~ we face the parallel corruption in which power, rather than heaven, is sold to
109 those who meet the price.

110 **Actions We Could Take**

111 Achieving the ideals of our faith related to democracy requires new approaches for mobilizing
112 power and influence. This means engaging in radical truth-telling, intersectional organizing, and
113 naming the forces that resist democratic reforms. A truly inclusive democracy challenges the
114 exploitation of peoples and natural resources by corporate and political power. Our collective
115 future calls us to ~~live into~~ participate in what Unitarian theologian Rev. James Luther Adams
116 named “the prophethood of all believers.”

117 Individuals can take actions such as the following:

- 118 ● Conduct a personal democracy audit. Review our relationships with systems that perpetuate
- 119 consolidation of wealth and power, i.e. investment choices.
- 120 ● Seek out varied and reliable sources of information.
- 121 ● Work with community leaders to do participatory budgeting in all levels of local and state
- 122 government.
- 123 ● Work with community leaders or organizations or assemblies to craft electoral platforms and
- 124 run supportive candidates.
- 125 ● Support electoral justice campaigns led by community organizers of color with voter
- 126 registration, particularly among underrepresented populations.
- 127 ● Contribute time, talent, and money to democracy-building efforts and to non-profit civic

- 128 organizations that represent economically oppressed or marginalized people.
- 129 ● Direct action toward democratic reforms and integrity through rallies, community organized
- 130 events, advocacy and contacts with elected officials. Specific goals include:
- 131 ○ public financing of campaigns including independent and third party candidates,
- 132 elimination of corporate donation, and establishment of a small donor matching system;
- 133 ○ expanding ballot access, i.e. early voting, access to polling places, same day voter
- 134 registration, permanent mail ballot list, and automatic voter registration;
- 135 ○ eliminating the electoral college;
- 136 ○ ensuring voting integrity with paper ballot backups;
- 137 ○ eliminating gerrymandering, partisan redistricting, and other forms of voter suppression;
- 138 ○ allowing people with felony convictions to vote;
- 139 ○ implementing ranked choice (proportional voting);
- 140 ○ reinstating the 1965 Voting Rights Act provisions, and strengthening the Federal
- 141 Elections Commission; and
- 142 ○ amending the Constitution to overturn ~~Citizens United~~ and end corporate personhood
- 143 corporate constitutional rights and money as speech.

144 Congregations/covenanted communities can take actions such as the following:

- 145 ● Conduct a congregational democracy audit that includes any practices that continue to sustain
- 146 white supremacy privilege and income inequality. Take action to address findings.
- 147 ● Organize action groups based on the needs of democratic reform and investigate how
- 148 structural racism, sexism, classism, environmental degradation, and militarization have
- 149 driven the accumulation of wealth and political power.
- 150 ● Partner with other UU congregations and with other faith communities, non-profits, and
- 151 unions to work on democratic reforms.
- 152 ● Support the Declaration for American Democracy campaign for comprehensive federal and
- 153 state democracy reform.
- 154 ● Organize advocacy initiatives such as postcards, social media campaigns, rallies, sit-ins,
- 155 petition drives, and other forms of direct action in support of democratic reforms.
- 156 ● Sponsor educational forums about factors contributing to the corruption of democracy.
- 157 ● As part of the offering or special collections, ask for funds to support democracy-
- 158 strengthening efforts.
- 159 ● Adopt resolutions supporting democratic reforms including overturning constitutional rights
- 160 and money as speech.
- 161 ● Collaborate with ongoing UU-related partnerships such as UUSJ's "Write Here! Write
- 162 Now!" campaign for democracy reform.
- 163 ● Include children and youth of the congregation in conversations and invite them to join
- 164 actions.

165 Clusters, districts, or state legislative ministries can take actions such as the following:

- 166 ● Advocate for state level democracy reform legislation, voter rights, access, and participation
- 167 as advocacy priorities.
- 168 ● Create and publish report cards on state or local legislators' records on campaign financing
- 169 and issues impacting voter rights, access, and participation.
- 170 ● Host non-partisan forums that alert congregations and the public to issues related to
- 171 democratic processes, and information about issues and candidates.

- 172 ● Connect congregations that are advocating for democratic reform at the state, local or
173 national level.
- 174 ● Use a variety of advocacy tools including media communications, social media, and meetings
175 with legislators to advocate for issues such as voting rights for people with felony
176 convictions, campaign finance reform, and election security.
- 177 ● Study gerrymandering issues within the state and advise advocates about recommended
178 actions to ensure fair representation.
- 179 ● Monitor and work to prevent privatization efforts and insist on accountability from existing
180 contractors that provide services, such as, private prisons, schools, and “welfare to work”
181 programs.
- 182 ● Support efforts to end the Electoral College and in the interim urge states to allocate their
183 electoral votes to the Presidential candidate who won the popular vote.

184 The UUA can take actions such as the following:

- 185 ● Conduct periodic association-wide democracy audits that include any practices that continue
186 to sustain any structures of oppression and disenfranchisement including white supremacy,
187 ableism, sexism, and classism. Take action to address the findings.
- 188 ● Provide for member congregations resources that promote effective democratic engagement.
- 189 ● Actively explore opportunities for virtually engaging more Unitarian Universalists in the
190 Association’s governance.
- 191 ● Continue refining the Association’s collective democratic decision-making processes with
192 tools such as ranked ~~choice~~ and proportional voting.
- 193 ● Invest in state legislative ministries and advocacy at the national level.
- 194 ● Participate in the democracy-supporting movements such as WeDemandDemocracy.org.
- 195 ● Participate in interfaith and multiracial coalitions and other social justice groups that work
196 toward achieving democratic reforms.
- 197 ● Follow the lead of communities of color advocacy and political action groups including the
198 cultivation ~~and support~~ of candidates for elected office.
- 199 ● Advocate for democratic reforms, including the limiting of money in politics and amending
200 the constitution to eliminate ~~corporations as persons~~ corporate constitutional rights and
201 money as speech.
- 202 ● Advocate for the elimination of the Electoral College.
- 203 ● Advocate for the protection of constitutional rights including the right to engage in
204 humanitarian aid, to boycott and to divest.

205 Rev. Barbara Pescan expressed both our debt and our ongoing responsibility to preceding
206 generations: “Because of those who came before, we are; in spite of their failings, we believe;
207 because of, and in spite of the horizons of their vision, we, too, dream.” The Nation’s founders
208 pointed in the direction of a horizon they themselves could not see. It falls now to us to make real
209 the dream of democracy uncorrupted, a government truly of the people, by the people, and for
210 the people.

UNINCORPORATED AMENDMENTS

- A. Line 192 Add “Encourage leaders of the UUA and other faiths to join the Interfaith Caucus of Move to Amend <https://movetoamend.org/interfaith-caucus>” (*too specific for SOC*)
- B. Line 10 Add “Compounding this corruption is the existential threat of a global climate crisis which our current federal government is failing to address. The impact of this crisis will fall most heavily

on low-income communities of color. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, ‘The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.’ We can no longer wait for that to happen. We must act to bend that arc now or face the unthinkable consequences of a destroyed environment and unlivable planet. If we are to rise to the moral challenge inherent in the climate crisis we must embrace the struggle to achieve an uncorrupted democracy.” (*Introduces a concept to this SOC regarding climate change addressed in an earlier SOC*)

- C. After Line 149 Add “overturn corporate constitutional rights and money as speech. Sign the petition at <https://movetoamend.org/motion> and supporting efforts to obtain passage of the 28th “We the People Amendment” (HJR 48) currently in the US Congress with over 48 cosponsors will help achieve that objective. This action is encouraged by the 2013 General Assembly approved: Action of Immediate Witness entitled: “Amend the Constitution: corporations are not persons and money is not speech.” (*too specific for SOC*)
- D. Line 103-109 Delete “in contrast to a theology of sin that sees human nature as fundamentally corrupt.” and “not in the suppression of basic sinfulness.” and “Another source of our religious movement is the Protestant Reformation’s response to the corruption of a church that sold the promise of heaven for a price.” (*contrast is helpful for understanding*)
- E. Line 40 Add after judiciary “guided by a code of ethics” (*the rule of law includes*)
- F. Line 124 Replace “supportive” with “progressive” (*avoid partisanship*)
- G. Line 10 Add “In the nearly two and a half centuries since our founding, we have vacillated between periods of progress and periods of regression: toward an uncorrupted democracy on even more insidious forms of corruption. Today our country faces a rise in wealth inequality that not only threatens the viability of our shrinking middle class, but is leading inexorably to a form of oligarchy.” (*Introduces a concept regarding economic inequity addressed in a recent SOC*)
- H. Line 27 After “for the people,” add “in the United States has”; change “entails” to “entailed” (*this section is not limited to democracy in the US*)
- I. Line 36 Add “freedom both of and from religion” (*freedom of includes freedom from*)
- J. Line 82 Add “Given the existential threat posed to our human race by rapidly accelerating climate change, the elimination of corporate constitutional rights and money as speech rise to primacy as the priority for restoring democracy. Only by eliminating the growing flood of money into the political system – most of which seeks to benefit corporations and the wealthy – along with the elimination of corporate constitutional rights can significant change be accomplished.” (*adding new concept of climate change*)
- K. Lines 2-3 Replace quote with: “I began to see all kinds of ways that climate change could become a catalyzing force for positive change – how it could be the best argument progressives have ever had to demand the rebuilding and reviving of local economies; to reclaim our democracies from corrosive corporate influence.” (*speaks less directly to the topic than the quote that is currently there*)
- L. Line 10 Add after 1st paragraph “Borrowing from sentiments expressed in an 1854 sermon delivered by the Unitarian minister Rev. Theodore Parker, Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. once said ‘let us realize the arc of the moral universe is long, but bends toward justice.’ It is now time for a new generation of civil rights activists to continue the journey towards justice.” (*does not add anything of substance to the SOC*)
- M. Line 13 Delete “As a means to an end” (*important for the context of following text*)
- N. Line 31 Replace with “free, fair, and competitive elections held at a frequency that promotes the interests of the electorate” (*addressed in another amendment*)
- O. Line 41 Add “and approved by the majority” (*unclear reference*)
- P. Line 46-47 Add “that attends to the concerns of the most vulnerable and cares about inclusion and exclusion.” (*Eliminates part of the definition*)
- Q. Line 64 Replace “people” with “classes” (*in a series that talks about people*)

- R. Line 78 Replace “oppression” with “marginalization” (*marginalization is oppression*)
- S. Line 79 Add “by ruling that political spending is protected free speech, and granting corporations constitutional rights as people. Before the Constitutions, the united States was governed by British Common Law, which defined corporations as “artificial persons”. That artificial personhood allowed them to sue and be sued, collect dues, sign contracts, pay employees – but they did not have legal rights. They only had privileges that could be taken at any time. What the U.S. Supreme Court has done over the years is to give them the constitutional rights of human beings. As such, for example, corporations have used the 4th, 5th and 14th Amendments to hide their violation of EPA regulation (4th), sued for “taking” of their property when environmental regulations affect their profits (5th), and pursued fracking in various communities under the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment.” (*too specific*)
- T. Line 84 Replace “that reflect a competitive orientation” with “that were designed in the 19th century to establish formal rules of debate” (*debate is competitive oriented*)
- U. Line 84 Replace “have not addressed the problem” with “rely on information access that is not universal” (*repeating something that appears two sentences later*)
- V. Line 102 Replace “live into” with “embody” (*similar meaning*)
- W. Line 106 Replace “building” with “working through,” add “and being” between “connections” and “open to diverse perspectives.” (*confusing*)
- X. Line 119 Add “see below” (*unclear reference*)
- Y. Line 135 Delete (*important concept for democracy*)
- Z. Line 139 Add “nationwide” (*unclear*)
- AA. After Line 143 Add “protecting basic constitutional rights (*already covered*)
- BB. After Line 160 Add “As requested in the 2013 AIW, pass resolutions of support for the above mentioned 28th “We the People” Amendment (HJR48) to overturn corporate constitutional rights and money as speech. See model congregational resolutions here: <http://unjusticefl.org/action-network/move-to-amend>. Post your resolution here: <https://movetoamend.org/resolutions-map>.” And “Encourage all members to join the interfaith Caucus of Move to Amend <https://movetoamend.org/interfaith-caucus> to address the existential threat of climate change and encourage others to do the same.” (*too specific for SOC*)
- CC. Line 165 Add “regions” (*regions are not legal entities and don’t do the types of activities specified*)
- DD. Line 168-169 Delete (*state legislative ministries can do this type of activity*)
- EE. Line 193 Add “support national agencies that already exist” (*too vague*)
- FF. After Line 196 Add “Pass a resolution of support for the 28th “We the People” speech (the Move to Amend amendment). File it here: <https://movetoamend.org/resolutions-map> and encourage congregations in your cluster, district or state legislative ministry to do so as well.” And “encourage all members to join the interfaith Caucus of Move to Amend <https://movetoamend.org/interfaith-caucus> to address the existential threat of climate change and encourage others to do the same.” (*too specific for SOC*)
- GG. Line 188 Add “and the MovetoAmend.org coalition which the UUA endorsed in 2010, and encourage the UU State Action Networks to pass resolutions in support and UUs nationwide to sign the petition at <https://movetoamend.org/motion>.” (*too specific for SOC*)
- HH. Line 200 Add “Support democratic reform for direct voting and enforcement of participation.” (*unclear*)
- II. Line 210 Add “Our most urgent responsibility and obligation is to future generations. We’re the first generation to feel the impact of climate change and the last generation that can do something about it. We must find ways to fix our broken democracy in order to heal our damaged world. And we must do it now.” (*it changes focus to climate change*)