

Women's Political Caucus sets goals

By Carol Oppenheim

THE FIRST priority of the newly formed National Women's Political Caucus is to seek congressional action on measures directly affecting women's rights.

Mrs. Rhea Mojica Hammer of Chicago, one of three caucus vice chairwomen elected at the convention last weekend in Houston, said that after the delegates left Sunday, the steering committee voted to take immediate action on the group's legislative agenda.

Among the items they consider especially important, Mrs. Hammer said, are:

- State ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment passed by Congress last year.
- Restoration of President Nixon's proposed cuts in the current federal budget for day care centers, mental health services, and rent supplements.
- Defeat of the Talmadge Amendment requiring welfare mothers to register for jobs unless the working mothers are guaranteed a minimum wage.

THE STEERING committee will hold its first official meeting in Washington on April 7 and 8. At that time, there will be a "grass roots report" on other caucus priorities, Mrs. Hammer said.

Altho the convention was the first national women's political convention in more than a century, the delegates voted to admit men—but as non-voting members.

Mrs. Hammer unsuccessfully fought the motion, pointing out "the nation already has heterosexual parties and we are women.

"THE PURPOSE of the caucus is to cross both political and state lines to fight discrimination regardless of sex, color, or creed. So we don't intend to put men down, but we do intend to fight for women's rights thru national power."

A 47-year-old divorcee and mother of a 12-year-old daughter, Mrs. Hammer has long been in the forefront of women's and civil rights movements.

She is a founding member of the Illinois caucus and at the state convention next month is expected to urge more women to run for state office.

LAST APRIL, she ran against the late United States Rep. George Collins in the 7th District Democratic primary and was defeated by a wide margin.

She also is co-chairperson of the La Raza Unida movement in Illinois, composed mostly of Mexican workers and their descendants.

La Raza has charged that the two major political parties have denied persons of Latin origin positions of dignity within the party structures.

Mrs. Hammer is director of Spanish programming at Channel 26 and once ran a TV talk show.