Women's Political Caucus Votes to Alter Membership Structure and ...
By EILEEN SHANAHANSpecial to the New York Times
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Women's Political Caucus Votes to Alter Membership Structure and Increase Dues Tenfold



Associated Press

Maya Miller, Democrat from Nevada, one of two women still running for a seat in the U.S. Senate.

By EILEEN SHANAHAN
Special to The New York Times

WICHITA, Kan., June 30—The National Women's Political Caucus, created three years ago with the goal of attaining more political power for women, voted today to change its basic membership structure and to increase its dues tenfold in an effort to build a more effective National organization.

The changes were in keeping with a new get-tough mood prevalent throughout the three-day meeting here of 600 caucus women representing 39 states and the District of Columbia.

Manifestations of the mood included a call by Representative Bella S. Abzug, the Manhattan Democrat, for women to stop working in the political compaigns of men—"even the good guys"—if the men do not, in turn, support women candidates and issues of importance to women, such as public financing for day care centers.

From the Republican side, Bobbie Greene Kilberg of Virginia, a national vice chairman of the caucus, warned that unless her party opened up to broader participation by women and other underrepresented groups, "after November Republicans are going to be talking only to Republicans and the Democrats are going to be talking to the country."

Strong for Impeachment

Sentiment for the impeachment of President Nixon was so strong among caucus members—about one-third of whom are Republicans—that Mrs. Abzug received a standing ovation when she made a mere reference to "the necessary business of impeachment."

No one criticized Mrs. Abzug's remark, a situation that contrasted markedly with what happened a year ago at the national convention of the caucus in Houson, when Mrs. Abzug was reprimanded, from the podium of this multipartisan organization, for attacking some of Mr. Nixon's policies. Some of the Republican women discussed walking out of the convention last year because of Mrs. Abzug's criticism.

The caucus, which has a mailing list of 35,000, expects a dues-paying membership of 20,000 with its new organizational structure.

Until now, the emphasis has been on state and local membership, and the dues paid to the national organization could be as low as $1 a year. Beginning in January, the dues to the national organization will be $10.

The additional money will be spent largely for the salaries of the national staff and for the preparation of campaign materials for use by candidates and technical assistance to candidates and organizers.

Frances T. Farenthold of Texas, chairman of the caucus, said that the dues increase and the additional emphasis on a national staff "may look like a housekeeping matter but it's actually vital."

A minority fought the dues increase, fearing it would put membership beyond the reach of many women.

Dissatisfaction with what women have achieved politically was expressed by many at the meeting, while at the same time there was much emphasis on the increased numbers of women running for office this year.

Records kept by the caucus indicated that 112 women have filed to run for the House or Senate this year, compared with 72 in 1972.

Of the 112, 67 are still in the running. At least 49 women have filed for statewide offices, of whom 29 are still in the running, including Representative Ella Grasso, Democrat of Connecticut, who is considered the frontrunner for Governor.

One of the two women still in the running for a seat in the United States Senate is Maya Miller, a Democrat from Nevada. She was at the caucus meeting and was endorsed by the caucus. The other woman, Barbara Mikulsky of Maryland, announced only yesterday.

Twenty-five other women candidates for various offices were at the meeting.

The national caucus endorses women candidates who support its programs, provided the state caucus asks for the endorsement.

Widespread support was expressed among members for Mary Anne Krupsak, who is running for Lieutenant Governor of New York as a Democrat, but the New York State caucus had not fulfilled the procedure for national endorsement.

News of the slaying of Mrs. Martin Luther King Sr. in Atlanta was announced by Mrs. Farenthold. In addition to passing a resolution of sympathy, the caucus members collected $255 in her memory that will be given to members of the Witchita Welfare Rights Organization to help pay their expenses to the national welfare organization's meeting in St. Louis next month.

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