



Organizational Policy: The Role of the Jubilee USA Policy Working Group

Approved by the Jubilee USA Network Council

November 17, 2008

Background:

In general, Jubilee USA Network enjoys a broad consensus within its membership on key debt and development related issues. This is remarkable for a network which brings together more than 75 organizations from across the political and ideological spectrum.

But as within any network or coalition, there are issues that occasionally arise that are the subject of serious disagreement among members. In the past four years, there have been two cases where this level of disagreement has emerged within Jubilee USA. The first instance, in 2005-2006, was over the decision by Jubilee USA to join the ONE campaign. The most recent instance, in 2008, was over the issue of whether Jubilee USA should pursue the attachment of the Jubilee Act to the Defense Reauthorization Act. It should be highlighted that these disagreements have often emerged based on principles and on debates which go to the very basis of faith traditions and values of members, so Jubilee has worked hard to recognize the validity of all points of view in these conversations.

When Jubilee USA Network was founded in 2001, there was a new structure put in place, with the Network Council as the official membership and governance body of the new organization. More than 75 organizations are members of the Jubilee USA Network Council, which meets annually. The Network Council has two functioning working groups – the Policy working group and the Grassroots working group. Both working groups meet monthly and are open to all member organizations of the Jubilee USA Network Council. The policy working group's mandate is to establish Jubilee's positions on public policy issues, develop the Network's legislative strategy, and coordinate the advocacy efforts of Jubilee USA members.

There is also a coordinating committee, whose members are elected at the annual Network Council membership meeting. This coordinating committee functions as a Board for Jubilee USA throughout the year and in between meetings of the Network Council. The "CC" as it is known, has the power to approve the organization's annual budget, hire/terminate the National Coordinator, set organizational policy, and perform other functions of a non-profit board in the time between annual Network Council meetings.

Historically, the policy working group has been a working group of the full Network Council rather than the CC, in recognition that public policy position, legislative strategies, and advocacy efforts should be subject of discussion and participation by any and all Jubilee member organizations. Generally this works well as the policy working group agrees on positions and strategies by consensus. But when challenging issues arise – as they have twice in the past four years – there is need for greater clarity over the proper decision making process. In both of the cases mentioned above, the decision of the policy group was brought to the coordinating committee for re-consideration. This has been an ad hoc process to date. To clarify the process that should be followed in the future, the Jubilee USA Network council adopted the following operational policy for the Network at its meeting on November 17, 2008:

Organizational Policy on the Role of the Policy Working Group

Decisions about public policy positions and legislative strategy are to be taken by the Jubilee USA Network Council's policy working group by majority vote of those present at the group's monthly meeting/conference call. These calls are regularly announced on the Policy working group listserv, and all Network Council members are welcomed to join the policy working group listserv. On the occasion that the policy working group is considering decisions of great importance to the Network, notice of the meeting/conference call will be sent to the full Network Council 7 days in advance of the meeting in addition to the normal notice that is sent to the policy working group listserv.

Proposals may be put to the policy working group by Jubilee USA staff or Network Council members. In the event that there is strong disagreement with a decision made by the policy working group, an individual Network Council member organization may request that the decision be re-considered by the Jubilee USA coordinating committee and a representative of this organization may present their views to the coordinating committee. Decisions made by the Jubilee Coordinating Committee are binding and final. It is anticipated that appeals to the Coordinating Committee will be made rarely as the policy working group is the body – open to all interested members -- that is empowered to make decisions on an ongoing basis on policy issues and legislative strategy.

In internal discussion, organizations will be able to indicate with other members of the network their desire to “stand aside” on a particular issue. If public or campaign alerts are sent out on issues which are controversial within the network, Jubilee USA will circulate the alert listing those organizations that support the action request and not include those organizations which have objected.