



7 January 2017

Women's March to Washington

In December 2016, Zonta International was made aware of the Women's March to Washington to take place in January 2017 and there were questions about whether Zonta International supports the march and encourages Zontians to participate in it.

In the study of the purpose of the march, ZI found that different sources claim different main reasons for it. From political reasons, as a protest of the results of the presidential elections, to the reasons given by human rights activists to make visible that women's rights are human rights and shall be respected.

Around 150 organizations have signed for partnership with Women's March on Washington (see the whole list <https://www.womensmarch.com/partners/>) Their vision and mission (<https://www.womensmarch.com/mission/>) indicates the reaction to the rhetoric used during the past election regarding multiple groups, and the commitment to honor the champions of human rights, dignity and justice in the spirit of democracy. The mission statement includes also a call on all defenders of human rights to join the march.

Zonta International, its districts and clubs shall be non-partisan and non-sectarian (Bylaws article III, Policy, section 1). Furthermore, Zonta International, its districts and its clubs may express themselves about and become involved in principles and public issues having a bearing on the Objects of Zonta International, following the policies established by the Zonta International Board (Bylaws article III, Policy, section 2).

Based on the knowledge about the march in December, Zonta International decided that the march was an opportunity for our members to increase awareness about our campaign Zonta Says No to Violence Against Women and to promote the objects of Zonta International¹. Participation in the march should be on voluntary basis, and should at no moment compromise Zonta International's policy of being non-partisan and non-sectarian.

Some of the latest news indicate that the march will focus more and more in protesting against the results of the presidential elections, while others focus on the purpose of the march as a

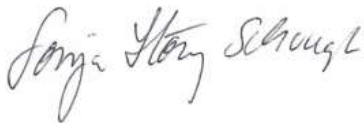
¹ The Objects of Zonta International shall be: (a) To improve the legal, political, economic, educational, health and professional status of women at the global and local level through service and advocacy. (b) To work for the advancement of understanding, goodwill and peace through a world fellowship of members. (c) To promote justice and universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. (d) To be united internationally to foster high ethical standards, to implement service programs, and to provide mutual support and fellowship for members who serve their communities, their nations and the world.

clear sign for the demand of respect and acknowledgement that women's rights are human rights.

Based on the above, Zonta International

- Recommends districts, clubs and members to follow the news thoroughly before they decide to participate to be sure that the purpose of the march does not shift towards partisan or sectarian issues and that the participation in the march does not jeopardize the safety and security of any Zontian.
- Advises districts and clubs that want to participate, that signs, comments, statements and any form for public communication shall focus only on Zonta International's campaign Zonta Says No to violence Against Women and our position on equal rights for all women.
- Reinforces that participation in the march is volunteer.

Yours sincerely



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President



Maria José Landeira Oestergaard

Chairman, International Advocacy
Committee