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Public Policy and You. Working together on public policy issues is more urgent now than ever before. People everywhere are taking a more active part in significant and/or controversial public policy issues, and their potential for impact is truly great. Extension's potential for impact in helping people understand these issues is even greater. We have the responsibility to meet this challenge and make this impact.

With a daughter in college and two sons in junior high, it's hard not to become involved with current issues, many of which are controversial. But, as an Extension home economist, I feel duty bound to do more. So far, I've programmed around such issues as abortion, ERA, rights and responsibilities of youth, older adults, welfare, and criminals. These programs have been frustrating, challenging, and rewarding. Programming in current issues that revolve around local and state needs and concerns is a way to focus on bringing about change by encouraging people to study facts and seek information.

Since public policy education is problem-oriented, we, as educators, must strive for objectivity and neutrality. And, we must keep our information completely factual . . . keeping our personal values, emotions, and choices to ourselves. They don't belong in our educational programs. Be sure to involve all factions of an issue—this will help avoid any accusations

of favoritism later on when the issue becomes a policy. People must be made aware of the alternative policy choices and their consequences.

Not everyone can or should program in public policy education. Public policy issues can be risk-taking and how much risk a person is willing to undertake is a personal decision. If you're comfortable with conflict and if you don't have difficulty keeping your perspective when an issue discussion becomes heated, then, the test of your decision to program on a public policy issue isn't whether your decision was made unemotionally, but rather whether all of your emotions involved have been expressed, recognized, and considered. We're in Extension to educate, not advocate. Remember, every public policy issue has myths and facts—destroy the myths, establish the facts—and provide a vehicle for analysis. Help to increase the understanding of Extension clientele on a public issue, so they have a broader base of knowledge from which to make a decision. Remember: we serve as a technician and a catalyst, not a decision maker.