Tips for Respectful Conversations
FairTalk (www.fair-talk.org)

Before beginning any conversation in which there may be disagreement, it is helpful to remind yourself of the following ideals for respectful conversations, put forth by Harold Heie (website http://www.respectfulconversation.net/)

- I will try to listen well, providing each person with a welcoming space to express her perspective on the issue at hand
- I will seek to empathetically understand the reasons another person has for her perspective
- I will express my perspective, and my reasons for holding that perspective, with commitment and conviction, but with a non-coercive style that invites conversation with a person who disagrees with me
- In my conversation with a person who disagrees with me, I will explore whether we can find some common ground that can further the conversation. But, if we cannot find common ground, I will conclude that "we can only agree to disagree;" yet I will do so in a way that demonstrates respect for the other and concern for her well-being and does not foreclose the possibility of future conversations.
- In aspiring to these ideals for conversation, I will also aspire, by the grace of God, to be characterized by humility, courage, patience and love

Some tips to keep in mind in participating in respectful conversations about relationship equality:

- Be informed and knowledgeable before the conversation (but you DON'T have to be an expert)
- Really listen, don't be thinking about what you want to say when it's your turn
- Ask questions about why a person holds their position or belief
- Make eye contact
- Refrain from negative body language (looking away, crossing your arms, rolling eyes)
- Don't interrupt
- Repeat what you heard the person say so they know you are really hearing them
- When possible, use the person's language to begin, and then introduce more affirming language
- Acknowledge how parts of this issue can feel uncomfortable for them.
- Be prepared to tell your own story. Why does this issue matter to you enough that you are talking about it with people. How does this affect you? Why do you care?
- Personalize the issue as much as possible. Talk about real people and real examples of how this affects real people.
- **Always end by asking if they will vote "no" when this proposal comes up for a vote.**
- **If they agree to vote "no", ask them if they will encourage at least one other person to vote "no".**