

**Worship & Action for Peace Letter**  
**December 8, 2004**

Every man lives in two realms, the internal and the external. The internal is that realm of spiritual ends expressed in art, literature, morals, and religion. The external is that complex of devices, techniques, mechanisms, and instrumentalities by means of which we live. Our problem today is that we have allowed the internal to become lost in the external. We have allowed the means by which we live to outdistance the ends for which we live. So much of modern life can be summarized in that arresting dictum of the poet Thoreau: "Improved means to an unimproved end." This is the serious predicament, the deep and haunting problem confronting modern man. If we are to survive today, our moral and spiritual "lag" must be eliminated. Enlarged material powers spell enlarged peril if there is not proportionate growth of the soul. When the "without" of man's nature subjugates the "within," dark storm clouds begin to form in the world.

This problem of spiritual and moral lag, which constitutes modern man's chief dilemma, expresses itself in three larger problems which grow out of man's ethical infantilism. Each of these problems, while appearing to be separate and isolated, is inextricably bound to the other. I refer to racial injustice, poverty, and war.

(From "The Quest for Peace and Justice," Martin Luther King, Jr., Nobel Laureate Lecture, December 11, 1964)

Dear Friends in New York Yearly Meeting,

The Friends Committee on National Legislation held its annual meeting last month, November 11–14. Approximately 180 General Committee members and other Friends gathered in worship and business to discern the business of FCNL for the coming year. In addition to considering and approving the budget and nominations, the gathering addressed, revised, and approved a Statement of Legislative Priorities to guide FCNL's work during the coming two-year 109th Congress, a Minute (Statement) on Moral Values, and a Minute on Conscientious Objection to War.

This large gathering of Friends with only a limited amount of time together came to unity around important, yet difficult, issues by relying on the power of reason, preparation and deliberation, worship, and attention to the Light of each. The draft Statement of Legislative Priorities presented to the General Committee reflected the work of at least 20 FCNL volunteers and staff over nearly nine months. It reflected the input of some 150 Friends meetings and churches from 30 yearly meetings or associations around the nation, often after careful, worshipful discernment in committees, special called meetings, and general meetings for worship or business.

At the annual meeting, developing the Statement of Legislative Priorities benefited from the effort of the gathered Friends to listen to the voice of God both within and in others, through worship and discussion in small groups, speaking opportunities during plenary sessions, and attention to the sense of the body in crafting revisions. Over three days of business, worship, and work, Friends came together around a program for the work of FCNL in the next two years that "seeks to bring the religious experience of Friends to bear on public policy decisions." Faith and action join to show us particulars of the peaceable kingdom.

We share the new FCNL Statement of Legislative Priorities below. (It also may be accessed online at: [www.fcnl.org/legpolcy/priority\\_109th.htm](http://www.fcnl.org/legpolcy/priority_109th.htm).)

In care,

Linda Chidsey, Vicki Cooley, Fred Dettmer, Lu Harper  
Worship and Action for Peace working group

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### **FCNL's Legislative Priorities for the 109th Congress**

(Approved by the General Committee

November 14, 2004)

The Friends Committee on National Legislation seeks to bring the religious experience of Friends to bear on public policy decisions. We are called to bear witness to God's love for every person by sounding a clear voice for truth and peace, bringing forward alternatives to violence, and working for justice.

We are committed to government of, by, and *for* the people. Current U.S. policies cause the vulnerable to lose hope and allow the wealthy to amass greater wealth. The public good is compromised in favor of private interests without accountability. The Executive branch is undermining laws, and Congress is abdicating its responsibilities to promote the public good.

Friends cherish integrity in public and private life. We call on our public officials to lead by example, to be accountable to the people they serve, and to adhere to the highest standards of ethics and civility.

We know that true security grows from international cooperation and trust, as well as respect for human dignity, economic and social equality, and the rule of law. Fear of further acts of terror is being manipulated to justify an agenda of endless war in the name of "security."

In light of these concerns, FCNL selects the following priorities for its work during the 109th Congress:

- Remove all U.S. military forces and bases from Iraq, and fulfill U.S. moral and legal obligations to reconstruct Iraq through appropriate multinational, national, and Iraqi agencies.
- Promote a framework for national and international security that includes peaceful prevention and resolution of deadly conflicts, active pursuit of arms control and disarmament, adherence to international law, support for the United Nations, and participation in multilateral efforts to address the root causes of war and of terrorism.
- Restore and assure full civil liberties for all persons in the United States or under its jurisdiction, and promote human rights around the world through international institutions and treaties.
- Change federal budget, tax, and fiscal policies to reduce military spending, meet pressing human needs, and address structural economic violence.
- Promote long-term protection of the environment and eliminate a critical cause of violent conflict by reducing oil consumption and accelerating development and use of renewable energy sources.

FCNL will continue active advocacy on Native American issues. As way opens, FCNL will continue Friends' long-standing witness for rights of conscience, criminal justice reform, abolition of the death penalty, and an end to institutional racism.

FCNL's work will be based on legislative opportunity, specific expertise and leadings, and resource availability. FCNL has the flexibility, within the Statement of Legislative Policy, to respond to crises and important legislative opportunities. Omitting an issue from these priorities does not imply a change in our policy.

The General Committee calls upon its members, other Friends, and like-minded people to promote these priorities. In addition to the issues that FCNL has the resources to address, many other deeply held concerns will continue to receive attention from individual Friends, monthly meetings and churches, yearly meetings, and other Quaker organizations.

As we work to find solutions to complex problems, Friends continue to seek divine guidance and ask for renewed strength and hope.