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FRIENDS COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL LEGISLATION

... a Quaker lobby in the public interest

2013-2014 Program Report to Yearly Meetings

Since the early days of the Religious Society of Friends, God's spirit has led Friends to take action in the world. For more than 70 years, FCNL has carried on this witness of the Spirit through action on Capitol Hill. Governed by a General Committee of 184 Friends that includes representatives of 25 yearly meetings and seven Quaker organizations around the country, FCNL seeks to bring the concerns, experiences and testimonies of Friends to bear on policy decisions in the nation's capital.

Driven by faith.

At FCNL's Annual Meeting in November 2013, the General Committee approved a new statement of legislative policy entitled *The World We Seek*. Revised every ten years, the new document was the product of an 18-month process of prayerful discernment involving more than 240 Friends meetings and churches. The statement sets forth FCNL's broad objectives for public policy and is the foundational document for FCNL's legislative priorities, which are set every two years. Meetings and churches have been invited to participate in setting the new legislative priorities, which will be approved at Annual Meeting this November, just after the congressional elections.

Grounded in policy.

In 2013 FCNL welcomed a record 271 people to our Annual Meeting. During Quaker Lobby Day prior to the start of Annual Meeting, 200 people visited 140 congressional offices to urge Congress to invest in our communities and impose budget discipline on the Pentagon. In the last year alone, Friends in FCNL have made more than 300 personal visits to lobby congressional offices in Washington and in their local districts. Our national FCNL network has also sent 126,000 issue-related messages to Congress, and in the first two months of 2014, Friends in FCNL published 60 letters to the editor in newspapers around the country.

Focused on the future.

A record number of young adults attended FCNL's Annual Meeting, providing energy, innovation and leadership for the future of Quaker advocacy. As I write this report, FCNL is preparing to host Spring Lobby Weekend, at which more than 150 high school and college students from around the country will learn, through skill building and policy seminars, about Quakers and government, public policy advocacy and how Congress works. This year our young adults will be lobbying Congress for repeal of the Authorization for the Use of Military Force. By creating opportunities for young people to engage in peace and social justice policy during the formative years of their lives, FCNL is ensuring that Friends' values will help shape public policy for years to come.

We are thankful for the meetings and churches, yearly meetings and individuals who provide FCNL with sustained and vital support. We are convinced by our faith and experience to continue building the peaceful, just, equitable and sustainable global community we seek. Above all, we seek to remain open to where God's spirit leads us.

DeAnne Butterfield, Clerk
FCNL General Committee, March 2014

We seek a world free of war and the threat of war
We seek a society with equity and justice for all
We seek a community where every person's potential may be fulfilled
We seek an earth restored

FCNL's staff and volunteers work with a nationwide network of thousands of people to advocate for social and economic justice, peace, care for the earth and good government. The following is a list of some of the issues that have been the focus of our work in 2013-2014:

Words into Action in Central African Republic: FCNL played a behind-the-scenes leadership role in connecting on-the-ground relief groups and conflict prevention experts with members of Congress and the administration. FCNL coordinated and drafted a policy document signed by nine colleague organizations urging a comprehensive U.S. government strategy to address the violence in the Central African Republic. The document was used by FCNL staff, who worked closely with the administration to help form the White House response to this ongoing crisis.

Campaign Finance: Last month, the 18 faith communities of the Faith and Democracy Working Group, including Quakers, sent a letter to Congress urging support for a Constitutional amendment to repair the damage done by the Citizens United case. FCNL co-convened the group that last fall finished brief reports on three topical areas where money in politics has skewed or prevented congressional debate on issues of importance to faith groups. The selected topics were climate change, gun violence and private prisons.

Hope for Averting War: FCNL's persistent and strategic lobbying on Capitol Hill has helped keep the door open for diplomacy with Iran. The historic first-step nuclear deal with Iran is significant movement toward a final agreement to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran. FCNL lobbyists in Washington have worked closely with administration officials and congressional offices to support negotiations with Iran. Grassroots advocates have been in regular contact with members of Congress to support these steps toward peace and security in the Middle East. We believe that these new diplomatic talks are the best opportunity in more than 30 years to end the cycle of confrontation between our countries.

Advocating for Rebalanced Federal Budget Priorities: The FCNL community worked very hard on the \$850 billion reduction in Pentagon spending over 10 years that Congress approved. Yet the military budget is still far too bloated at a time when funds for necessary domestic programs are dwindling. We continue to press assertively for better budget priorities that serve human and community needs.

A New Approach to Climate Disruption: FCNL is partnering with faith, citizen, diversity and youth communities on the local, state and national level to ask elected representatives to acknowledge the reality and impact of climate disruption as a moral issue. FCNL advances the shared concern for and commitment to Creation and lifts the voices of people of faith, young people and people from communities directly affected by climate disruption. Through this lens of a shared future, the initiative strives to minimize partisanship and create political space for meaningful legislative solutions.

Repeal of the Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF): We have the best opportunity in more than 12 years to roll back the law that has kept our country in an endless war since 2001. Passed immediately after the 9/11 attacks, the AUMF has been used to justify not only the war in Afghanistan but also everything from indefinite detentions at Guantanamo Bay, to a growing number of drone attacks, to widespread warrantless wiretapping. This year we are working hard to repeal the AUMF in the House through intensive Hill lobbying and a focused mobilization around the country.