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FRIENDS COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL LEGISLATION

... a Quaker lobby in the public interest

Friends Lobbying in the Public Interest in 2012-2013 Program Report from the Friends Committee on National Legislation

*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*

The strength of our Quaker lobby in the public interest is our grounding in the Religious Society of Friends. This past year our community's engagement was particularly visible in

- Our first Quaker Public Policy Institute and Lobby Day: some 300 Friends came to Washington in November to lobby their members of Congress to cut \$1 trillion in Pentagon spending;
- The 241 Friends meetings and churches around the country that contributed to setting our legislative priorities and the many Friends gatherings that are using corporate discernment to help improve our policy statement;
- The FCNL contacts and letter writing coordinators at some 650 meetings and churches around the country that faithfully engage local Friends in the educational and public policy work of our community;
- The thousands of Friends who are a part of this Spirit-led Quaker organization that celebrates in 2013 its 70th year of service to the Religious Society of Friends.

Our community's combination of prophetic, practical public policy advocacy is as necessary today as it ever has been. With the support of meetings and churches around the country, we have been able to

- Persuade Congress to terminate \$6 billion of funding for a new nuclear weapons plant;
- Lobby Congress to "undeclare" war with Iran: the 2012 military authorization bill stated explicitly that "nothing in this Act shall be construed as authorizing the use of force against Iran;"
- Mobilize interfaith leaders to press Congress to address climate disruption;
- Keep significant cuts to military spending on the table in congressional debates about the federal budget;
- Continue our Kenya Quaker collaboration focused on preventing violence and educating U.S. policymakers and constituents on the positive role they can play supporting peace in the 2013 Kenyan elections;
- Join interfaith action calls for strong congressional action on gun violence prevention.

Since 1943 FCNL's reputation on Capitol Hill has been grounded in the credibility of our information and the integrity with which we approach the practice of influencing public policy. FCNL's powerful combination of skilled staff lobbyists and energized and mobilized grassroots community members work together and celebrate many legislative accomplishments every year. Here are some examples of how we do what we do.

Advancing a World Free of Nuclear Weapons: After identifying the very small number of members of Congress who have the most influence on decisions about nuclear weapons policies, FCNL staff mobilized hundreds of constituents in the districts and states of these members to successfully defeat efforts to build a new nuclear weapons laboratory and to increase funding for nonproliferation programs.

Peacefully Preventing Deadly Conflict: FCNL created and convenes a Washington Working Group of 30 human rights and peacebuilding organizations that helped persuade the U.S. government to create the first ever interagency, governmental group focused on preventing mass atrocities. Now that coalition is helping to set the priorities for the new Atrocities Prevention Board and to build support within the administration and Congress.

Ending War and Questioning Drones: FCNL's Afghanistan program celebrated its greatest victory to date in late 2012 with the passage of a Senate amendment calling for the expedited withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan, 18 months ahead of the December 2014 timetable. We continue to press Congress to develop strategies to prevent war with Iran and work to support peace between Israelis and Palestinians. Our staff is also taking a leadership role in congressional efforts to question the expanded use of drones.

Native American Advocacy: FCNL's Native American Legislative Update is sent to thousands of activists every month. Their lobbying helped convince Congress to pass the HEARTH Act (Helping Expedite and Advance Responsible Tribal Homeownership Act) which makes it easier for tribal governments to lease their lands without first having to obtain specific approval from the Secretary of the Department of the Interior. This was the most sweeping land-use reform of its kind in 50 years. FCNL lobbied for the successful passage of a strong Violence Against Women Act that included protections for Native American women and other vulnerable groups.

Acting on Global Warming: FCNL is a lead organizer of a new interfaith coalition to raise the moral voice in Washington on climate change. In December we sponsored a well-attended briefing on climate change for members of Congress, congressional staff and faith leaders from around the country. More than 100 young people attended Spring Lobby Weekend in March 2013 to focus on Climate Action: From Protest to Policy Change.

Steps Toward Immigration Reform: FCNL staff members see huge opportunities for progress toward enacting comprehensive immigration reform in 2013. Our staff has met with the White House Domestic Policy Council and key congressional leaders and are now working to advance positive measures to reform our broken immigration system and challenge laws that are punitive, wasteful or dangerous.

We are grateful for the faithful support of the many Quaker meetings and churches, individual donors, and foundations which allow FCNL to turn the visionary priorities set by the FCNL General Committee into successful legislative change in national policy. *We rely on your support.* Your continued and growing financial contributions to FCNL assure that our engagement on Capitol Hill and throughout our network will be effective and strong.

In the months ahead FCNL will continue to balance strategic activism with a relentless pursuit of change. On behalf of the General Committee, thank you to all Friends for your many contributions of time, energy, and dollars which make FCNL's work possible.

A.T. Miller, Clerk
FCNL General Committee, March 2013

(This report may be reproduced and circulated.)