

My name is Diane Keefe, member Wilton Meeting, clerk of NYYM delegates to FCNL.

I am here to ask Friends to engage with our members of Congress when they are in their home districts for the August recess.

The biggest issue now is the Federal budget as proposed for 2018, which will spend \$695 billion on the military, a \$73 billion increase from 2016 while health care, housing, environmental, and diplomacy programs are experiencing massive cuts. Now is the time to raise our voices about our nation's spending priorities. Go to FCNL.org to be connected with other Friends in your district who plan to lobby. The House and Senate members and their staffs welcome constituent visits and phone calls. You don't have to be a policy expert. Just speak from your heart.

Next, good news. As a result of the recent FCNL capital campaign the Friends Welcome Center will open beginning this October to welcome delegations of Friends to Washington, DC for lobbying throughout the year.

I encourage you to write a letter to the editor. Speak with friends and family who hold different opinions. Share information on fcnl.org's web site on social media. Some of the facts speak volumes. In 2016 the US military budget was greater than the next 12 countries combined. China, the world's 2nd biggest military power spends less than 1/3 of what the US spends each year. The sequester budget reforms enforced during the Obama years which required equal cuts to military and non-military programs for deficit reduction, no longer constrain military spending under this new budget. The nuclear stockpile is being modernized in the proposed 2018 US budget, while 120 non-nuclear countries just signed a UN treaty against the development of nuclear weapons in June 2017. Paraphrasing the great Mother Jones, "Which side are we on?" If we believe in peace, we must ask our representatives to put our tax money toward building peace, not weapons.

FCNL is also working on immigration rights for "dreamers" and for a path to citizenship for immigrants, many of whom have fled horrendous economic and political conditions in their home countries. In my community, Norwalk, CT a woman who had been in the US for 24 years was threatened with deportation last week when she went to her regular check in meeting. She took refuge in a church, many miles away from her 4 children. Friends, now is the time to speak out.

Last annual meeting, we gathered the day after the Trump election to work on decreasing minimum sentences for non-violent crimes by prisoners in federal penitentiaries. The excitement of seeing the beloved community assembled to call forth bipartisan movements of legislators echoes our testimony that there is that of God in all of us and in all our legislators. If you are interested in going to annual

meeting Nov 2-5th, 2017 or becoming a NYYM delegate, let's talk. I will be around all week.

This year FCNL is calling our attention to the Pretrial Integrity and Safety Act to reform the bail system. The US Constitution prohibits "excessive bail". In 1983 the Supreme Court ruled in *Beardon v. Georgia* that the constitution prohibits punishing a person for his poverty, but that's what the bail system does according to a recent op-ed in the New York Times by Senators Kamala Harris and Rand Paul, the co-sponsors of the reform bill. They cite that " Nine out of 10 defendants who are detained cannot afford to post bail, which can exceed \$20,000 even for minor crimes like stealing \$105 in clothing... Black and Latino defendants are more likely to be detained before trial and less likely to be able to post bail compared with similarly situated white defendants...Black and Latino men pay 35 percent and 19 percent higher bail than white men." Again, we are called to lift up our voices.

FCNL calls on us to speak out about the importance in responding to climate change with leadership, not denial. It challenges us to remind our legislators of the negative effects repealing the ACA would have on native american communities. There are a plethora of issues. Pick the one that moves you most and become an advocate. Our country is a great experiment in democracy-imperfect, messy and beautiful as it evolves toward a "more perfect" union. Informed engaged citizens can make a difference. Please consider supporting FCNL's legislative initiatives in big and small ways. Thanks.