Report of SAYMA's FCNL Representatives May 2011

****All who would like to learn more about FCNL are invited to join us Friday at lunch in a private dining room TBA. And don't forget to visit the FCNL exhibit.****

SAYMA representatives to the General Committee of the Friends Committee on National Legislation for 2011 are Kelly Schoolmeester (*jetgolfer@gmail.com),* Joe Parko *(Jparko90@charter.net)* and Jane Hiles (*njhiles@samford.edu)*. This year's work with FCNL has been deeply inspiring and, even in these fraught times, hopeful. So here's what you need to know about FCNL….

FCNL makes a difference. Despite a political mood in Congress too often antagonistic to our basic tenets, FCNL can point to important policy successes, such as the 2010 establishment of the $50 million Complex Crises Fund, which provides the State Department and the US Agency for International Development with unprogrammed funding to address "emerging or unforeseen crises," allowing our government to move quickly and to invest in diplomacy and negotiation rather than war. President Obama has requested $75 million for this fund in FY 2012. These funds have been used in Kenya to encourage peaceful implementation of the new constitution in areas of the nation that were most affected by post-election violence in 2007. In Sri Lanka the fund has enabled 55,000 displaced war refugees to return and once again earn a living from agriculture. (See the FCNL table for other successes.)

SAYMA FCNL Representatives have been engaged with FCNL in a variety of ways this past year. Kelly Schoolmeester was named to the Policy Committee of FCNL. Joe Parko's work this year with FCNL has centered on the military budget and securing funding for the Complex Crises Fund. He has lobbied members of Congress representing the SAYMA region and talked on the phone with staff in a dozen congressional offices about FCNL's stance on these issues. He has also written and published several articles on these issues. (One is attached.) In addition to lobbying activities with a particular concern for immigration and budget issues, Jane Hiles contacted meetings to encourage wider SAYMA participation in the FCNL priorities-setting process in spring of 2010; she has worked with Carol Nickle to organize the FCNL table and interest group lunch for this gathering, and she has been named to the FCNL Field Committee for 2012.

FCNL wants your input. In advance of the annual meeting, there was a concerted effort to increase input from Monthly Meetings on FCNL's legislative priorities for the 112th Congress (2011-12). General Committee members contacted Monthly Meetings in their region to encourage meetings to name FCNL contacts and to solicit minuted lists of suggested priorities due in April, 2010. A total of 270 Quaker Meetings and Churches around the country responded to FCNL, and these minutes went to the Policy

Committee to launch the process. Any SAYMA Monthly Meeting without an FCNL Contact to keep the meeting apprised of FCNL communications and efforts is encouraged to name one. Friends can either correspond directly with FCNL to report their contact's name and email address, or they may contact Jane Hiles and I will be glad to pass the information along so that all SAYMA MMs can participate in this important part of FCNL's discernment process.

FCNL's Legislative Priorities respond to Friends' concerns. At the annual meeting in early November, 2010, the discernment process for legislative priorities continued with worship sharing, small group meetings devoted to specific issues, and meetings of the whole for worship with attention to business. It is miraculous to see the Quaker process lead to unity such a large and diverse body of Friends, and the resulting Legislative Priorities are inspiring, from the call to "build government civilian capacity for peaceful prevention and resolution of deadly conflict" to the one to "support the restoration of full civil liberties and habeas corpus protections for all persons" and to "oppose torture and secret prisons" to the call for "U.S. leadership in promoting social equity, ecological sustainability, and environmental justice through domestic action, diplomacy, compliance with multilateral environmental agreements, and cooperation with organizations such as the United Nations to diminish resource scarcity as a cause of war." (See attachment of Legislative Priorities for the 112th Congress.)

FCNL needs your support. Like so many other Quaker organizations, FCNL is feeling the effects of the recession. General Committee members recently received a request for additional contributions to meet a June budget shortfall. Friends are encouraged to support FCNL as they are led and able, knowing that their support is truly needed and efficacious. This is a time in which there is much need for FCNL's voice.

FCNL has room to grow. Outgoing Executive Secretary Joe Volk reminded us in his plenary address that we should not be complacent about where FCNL is today: "In a country of 300 million people, we cannot be satisfied with 60,000 community-based lobbyists and 10,000 donors."

With hopes of peace for all,

Jane Hiles

Jane Hiles
Birmingham Friends Meeting
njhiles@samford.edu

Addendum 1

FCNL Priorities for the 112th Congress

Approved November 14, 2010

The Religious Society of Friends from its earliest days has recognized life to be a sacred stewardship. Under the leading of God's Spirit, Friends have helped bring the light of social change to the darkness that was slavery, the oppression of women and minorities, and the longstanding suffering inflicted on the world by violent conflict. The Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) has spent two-thirds of a century laying the firm foundation for our nonpartisan witness on Capitol Hill. FCNL has drawn upon the spiritual experience of Friends and has regularly sought the consultation of Quaker meetings, churches, and organizations around the country to discern priorities for the lobbying and public education work to be carried out during each session of Congress.

The faith that continues to sustain us and give us hope motivates us to bring light to the challenges facing humanity in the 21st century. FCNL will work to redefine the human and national security of the United States to include freedom from deadly conflict, freedom from abuse by powerful and wealthy corporations and individuals, meeting basic human needs in the face of the current economic turmoil, and protection of the Earth's air, water, and land on which all life depends. Pressing issues of energy and environment relate not only to climate change, but also to war, military spending, the nation's budget, and the capacity and willingness of the United States to meet domestic human needs and invest in the well-being of vulnerable populations abroad.

The following priorities will guide our legislative work and public education during the 112th Congress (2011-2012).

I. We seek a world free of war and the threat of war.

Build U.S. government civilian capacity for peaceful prevention and resolution of deadly conflict. Support the United Nations and multilateral problem solving. Encourage respect for human rights, and international law, including treaties. Promote nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation, including ratification of the pending New START Treaty and progress on other strategic arms reduction. Seek U.S. ratification of and compliance with bans on nuclear testing, cluster munitions, and land mines.

Work for demilitarization of U.S. foreign policy and aid programs. Urge reductions in the overall military budget and in worldwide U.S. military operations. Emphasize multilateral aid, civilian peace building, and regional and international diplomacy, especially in relation to Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

While pressing for removal of U.S. bases and combat forces from Iraq and Afghanistan, promote fulfillment of U.S. moral and legal obligations for

reconstruction.

Urge vigorous U.S. leadership, in partnership with the international community, to help resolve the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and end the enforced isolation of Gaza.

II. We seek a society with equity and justice for all.
Support legislation to curb the undue influence of money and corporate power in our political system.

Support comprehensive immigration reform that respects the rights and dignity of all immigrants; demonstrates compassion for families; provides practical pathways to legal residency and citizenship; and recognizes the important contributions of foreign workers in our economy and the need for effective application of wage, hour, and workplace safety laws for all workers. Urge Congress to use civilian governmental agencies, rather than military personnel, to manage U.S. borders.

Support the restoration of full civil liberties and habeas corpus protections for all persons. Oppose torture and secret prisons. Urge that those accused of terrorism be prosecuted in civilian courts.

Promote and preserve tribal sovereignty of indigenous peoples within the United States. Support legislation that respects their rights, clarifies jurisdictional conflicts, promotes the well-being of all Native Americans, and honors treaty commitments.

III. We seek a community where every person's potential may be fulfilled.
Promote human security and the common good through a living wage, job creation (especially "green" jobs), access to retraining and good public education, and improved affordable health care for all without discrimination. Defend safety-net programs for those in need. Support this effort through progressive taxation and cuts in military spending.

IV. We seek an earth restored.
Support bold and immediate measures to counter global climate change and assist threatened human populations at home and abroad. Pursue a fundamental shift in U.S. energy policy from extractive practices toward accelerated development of sustainable, less damaging energy sources with attention to the impacts on communities and livelihoods. Promote deep, quick, and fair reductions in U.S. greenhouse gas emissions as part of a sensible path to a low-carbon future.

Encourage U.S. leadership in promoting social equity, ecological sustainability, and environmental justice through domestic action, diplomacy, compliance with multilateral environmental agreements, and cooperation with organizations such

as the United Nations to diminish resource scarcity as a cause of war.

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As way opens, FCNL will continue Friends' long-standing witness for rights of conscience, and end to institutional racism, criminal justice reform that includes principles of restorative justice and the abolition of the death penalty, and will support legislation that promotes sustainable agriculture and protects the environment and public health from the impacts of contamination, pollution, and inequitable distribution of natural resources, and promotes energy conservation and efficiency and public transportation.

FCNL's work will be based on legislative opportunity, specific expertise and leadings, and available resources. FCNL's Policy Statement gives it the flexibility to respond to crises and important legislative opportunities.

In establishing these priorities for the 112th Congress, we are encouraged by the past successes of FCNL's efforts to influence federal policy and by the strong community of Friends and other likeminded people engaged in this work. As we work to find solutions to these complex problems, Friends continue to seek Divine guidance, renewed strength, and hope.

These priorities are drawn from FCNL's Policy Statement:

http://www.fcnl.org/priorities/policy.htm

Addendum 2

From: Joe Parko [mailto:jparko90@charter.net]
Sent: Wednesday, April 27, 2011 12:01 PM
To: Alexandra Stark; Mary Stata
Subject: Fw: article in today's Crossville newspaper

I wanted to share this latest op-ed with FCNL.

Joe Parko

FCNL SAYMA representative

April 26, 2011

We the People: War is not the answer

By Joe Parko Chronicle contributor

CROSSVILLE — It's as if a giant octopus has wrapped its tentacles around the body of America and is smothering any attempts at honest debate or even discussion over the never-ending promotion of war. That octopus, the ultra powerful military-industrial complex, is the tight-knit combination of the Pentagon and the arms industry.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower, in his farewell address to the nation in 1961, warned that, "In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals so that security and liberty may prosper together."

This was a Republican president and the former Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe that achieved victory over Hitler's powerful war machine in World War II. This famous general, because of his long military career, might have been thought to be a war hawk but he certainly was not. He was a brilliant war strategist but he knew from personal experience the horrors of war and that it was not a thing to take lightly.

Eisenhower also knew all about the military-industrial complex from his experience in the military and in leading our nation and our government. He knew exactly the dangers it posed as evidenced by his very strong remarks in that farewell address 50 years ago. He was issuing a warning about the perils of this massive war-making machine, fearing that, without proper restraints and controls, it would evolve into exactly the highly influential, powerful force that it is today.

Ever since 9/11, the military-industrial complex, together with most of the media, has aggressively promoted the war on terror and the threat of another terrorist attack to justify continued military actions. We are now faced with the very real threat that the military-industrial complex is actually controlling decisions about war in Congress and the White House.

I'm afraid that the injection of fear into the American mind has been very successful. Just think about how many times throughout any given day, whether on the radio, cable TV channels or in newspapers, you hear and read comments about terrorists, insurgents or some potential threat to our security. It is almost non-stop and appears to

have been woven into the mental fabric of America.

The military-industrial complex has fed off this tragedy for years. It has made massive profits from the wars in both Iraq and Afghanistan as a result. And you can bet that it will continue to use the media to maintain that sense of fear in the minds of Americans.

This nation and our people must come to the realization that we no longer can live under a constant cloud of fear and apprehension. This is a course leading to disaster. Somehow, some way we must cleanse ourselves of this pervasive war mentality. This constant marketing of fear is making us all insane. We have become a paranoid nation that is willing to bankrupt ourselves in a vain attempt to keep ourselves safe. We have spent over a Trillion dollars on these distant wars when reason tells us that covert intelligence work, not war, is the key to stopping any terrorist acts against us. But, unfortunately, intelligence work is not as profitable as war for the military-industrial complex because our intelligence agencies rely on information instead of expensive weapons.

Endless war not only bankrupts America financially. It also bankrupts us morally. The use of violence against other nations promotes the use of violence by our own people here in our own nation. When you approve of bombing and killing on the other side of the planet, you also legitimize the use of violence here at home. Look at the dramatic rise in the number of hate groups in America. Look at the way computer war games are influencing our young people. We are rapidly becoming a nation addicted to violence.

We the people must not let President Eisenhower's worst fears about the military-industrial complex become a reality. We must demand an end to endless war that is bleeding our nation dry. Tell Congress and the White House to bring our troops home and to cut funding for war. Let us beat our swords into plowshares and start producing products that help our people lead better lives, instead of weapons that destroy lives. Half of our nation’s budget now goes to the military. Just think what we could do if we shifted a sizeable portion of that money to new technologies and products that served our people here at home. Instead of talking about cutting Social Security, Medicare and education, let’s talk about cutting our bloated weapons budget.

As we begin the process of leaving Iraq and Afghanistan, must we start a new war in Libya? Must we allow the war machine to endlessly create new wars to keep itself going? It’s time for We the People to say loudly and clearly that endless war is not the answer to America’s problems.