

Report of the FCNL Representatives for 2016

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As your SAYMA Representatives to the Friends Committee on National Legislation, we attended the sessions of FCNL's annual meeting in Washington, DC, November 12 – 15, 2015. The theme: Building a Pathway to Peace.

Annual Meeting 2015

The main focus of the more than 400 Quakers and like-minded activists met in Washington, DC, was to build a pathway to peace. We lobbied in support of the Atrocities Prevention Board and tools to pivot U.S. foreign policy to peace. Senators and Representatives across the political spectrum thanked the group for their advocacy, and we're looking forward to new legislation to prevent atrocities and genocide. Following the Quaker Public Policy Institute and Lobby Day, FCNL's governors met to approve members of our General Committee, set the budget, and lay out plans for advocacy work in the next year.

The much-beloved "War Is Not the Answer" message which has adorned FCNL banners and yard signs since 2001 has been recast with a positive message and updated for the social media generation: "#Pivot2Peace (War doesn't work)."

FCNL's financial position remains strong. The 2016 and 2017 budgets are the largest ever. FCNL is returning to the financial and advocacy trajectory hoped for before the 2008 financial crisis, when staff was cut from 40 full time equivalent (FTE) employees to of 24.6 FTE. FCNL is currently staffed at 43 FTE. While investment income waxes and wanes, individual contributions have remained on a path of steady growth. In order to allow for maximum management flexibility, be sure that contributions are made to FCNL (a 501(c)4 organization), as opposed to the FCNL Education Fund (a 501(c)3 organization), whenever possible. *Friends meetings are not at risk of losing their status as tax-exempt religious organizations by making contributions to FCNL.*

Other meeting highlights included the Snyder Peace Award to Senator Dick Durbin and a celebration of Ed Snyder's 90th birthday. Ed recommended a book title for us all: *Why Civil Resistance Works* by Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan.

What has FCNL done in the last year?

FCNL is seeing significant progress toward a number of its legislative priorities. At the same time, the Capital Campaign has allowed FCNL to expand programs and opportunities to involve Young Friends in this work.

[New opportunities for advocacy—especially for Young Adults and Young Friends](#)

Spring Lobby Weekend 2016

The Spring Lobby Weekend is an important part of FCNL's outreach to Young Friends and Young Adult Friends, drawing from Quaker Schools as well as from a variety of colleges and universities across the country. The event gathers attendees, briefs them on a legislative goal and helps them lobby on the Hill. The program began in 2013 with 110 participants who made 56 lobby visits. It has grown in popularity with student groups, and this spring it hosted 397 participants who made 158 lobby visits in support of sentencing reform: the Senate Sentencing Reform & Corrections Act (S 2123) and two bills in the House, The Sentencing Reform Act of 2015 (H.R. 3713) and The Recidivism Risk Reduction Act (H.R. 759). Watch the SAYMA list for news of the 2017 Spring Lobby Weekend from your FCNL representatives.

Young Fellows Program

Young Fellows join FCNL staff in Washington full-time for 11 months. In this continuing program, Fellows are paid at the DC living wage standard and receive benefits. Aimed at college graduates.

Summer Internships

Interns receive a broad introduction to federal policy, grassroots organizing, and nonprofit management during two months (June 1 - July 31) of unpaid internship. Ideal for ages 18-23, but older people have also benefitted from this experience.

Advocacy Corps

Advocacy Corps members connect local activists and leaders with their members of Congress to effect long-term change. They learn critical organizing skills and put them into practice with hands-on leadership experience. Spend 10 days in Washington in the summer (all expenses paid) and then work 25 to 35 hours a month back on your college campus or in your home community.

Advocacy Teams

Led by Maiya Zwerling (who visited SAYMA 2 years ago), Advocacy Teams gather locally once a month to hear from experts, to celebrate and learn from those across the country, and to take action for a more peaceful world. Teams listen to a conference call for the first hour and spend the following hour taking action together. From July to mid-September, team members from across the country logged over 80 lobby visits with members of Congress and their staff and published over 30 letters to the editor. Open to all.

Progress on Legislative Priorities

Although the legislative field has been fraught, FCNL has worked in coalition and on both sides of the aisle in Congress to effect the changes that we hope to see. And it has made a difference. Here are highlights of some recent successes.

- FCNL's Elizabeth Beavers and Michael Shank broke the story of the [militarization of Main Street](#) in two op-eds long before the events in Ferguson, MO, brought it into the headlines, and in May 2015, President Obama issued an executive order limiting the Pentagon 1033 program that allows military weapons to go to local U.S. police departments. The executive order bans the federal government from sending some types of military equipment to U.S. police departments, and it mirrors the bill FCNL had been advocating for a year, the Stop Militarizing Law Enforcement Act.
- Successful bi-partisan introduction of the [Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act](#), S.2551, on February 11, 2016, by Senators Cardin (MD) and Tillis (NC) with a bipartisan group of cosponsors. Since introduction three additional co-sponsors have joined, including two Republicans. The Statement of Support for the Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act was signed by 64 organizations with major support from United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and World Relief. The FCNL network has sent 53,345 messages to their Senators urging support for the Act. This bill extends the recommendations of the bipartisan S.Con.Res.71 (Feingold, 2010) that led to **President Obama's May 18, 2016 Executive Order: Comprehensive Approach to Atrocity Prevention and Response**. FCNL continues to support the legislation because S.2551 serves to better focus U.S. policy and Congressional oversight on the prevention of mass atrocities, and supports the moral obligation and commitment to the promise of "never again" made after the Holocaust.
- Every Student Succeeds Act, Congress agreed to put this statement in the federal law books (Title 20, Section 7401): "It is further the policy of the United States to ensure that [Indian children](#) do not attend school in buildings that are dilapidated or deteriorating, which may negatively affect the academic success of such

children.” Both the “budget deal” in December and the President’s budget included important funding increases for a wide range of programs in Indian Country. While budget games and budget constraints may prevent all of these improvements from being funded, the proposals at least show awareness of the areas of need.

- FCNL worked closely with Rep. Blumenauer’s office in strategizing on the [Gaza Water Crisis](#) and were happy to see his inclusion of Gaza in his op-ed on World Water Day in *The Hill*.
- Issues related to [Climate Change](#) have seen a lot of activity. Rep. David Jolly (FL) became the 12th co-sponsor of the Gibson Climate Change Resolution, H. Res. 424, bringing the total up to 13 Republicans. The State Dept. successfully funded \$500 million to the Green Climate Fund, fulfilling the first part of President Obama’s pledge to the international community. Over 115 faith and religious organizations signed onto an interfaith letter asking Congress to fund \$750 million for FY 2017 for the Green Climate Fund.
- All that and fewer [nukes](#). January, 2015 marked the formal implementation of the international agreement with Iran that has reduced the prospects of a nuclear-armed Iran and demonstrated how effective diplomacy can work to end a thirty-year cycle of hostile rhetoric and actions. Lobbying from FCNL and like-minded groups helped assure that opponents didn’t dismantle the treaty as they had threatened to do.

Capital Campaign

Over the last two years, we have reported to you about FCNL’s five-year, \$15 million Capital Campaign. With these funds, FCNL hopes to increase advocacy by young adults, sustain and expand lobbying, and re-establish the *Friend in Washington* program. Nine of the fifteen million dollars will be added to FCNL’s endowment to protect our long-term viability in these areas. One million dollars is being used to renovate the 205 C Street property into a (carbon neutral) welcome center and informal meeting space. This campaign is in addition to the Annual Fund, which is projected to remain on a path of steady growth.

The third year of the Capital Campaign has just ended, with over \$13 million (88% of goal) in gifts and commitments from large donors and General Committee members. Expanded programming has already begun, such as the new Advocacy Corps (see above).

The public phase of the Campaign has now begun, and includes solicitation of contributions from monthly and yearly meetings (that’s us!). We urge each of SAYMA’s constituent meetings to think and plan for a special Capital Campaign contribution to FCNL. We also urge SAYMA to consider how it can support FCNL in this way. Commitments may be made up to June 30, 2017 and paid over a period of up to five years.

Representatives’ Concerns

We are hoping to develop stronger lines of communication among FCNL Contacts in SAYMA’s constituent meetings. We hope that every monthly meeting will name an FCNL Contact and send that Contact’s information to us, so we can keep in touch more effectively. Since this spring was a Priorities Setting year, we attempted to communicate with monthly meetings via the SAYMA email list and would like to know if your meeting did not receive our information about the Priorities Process. The biennial Priorities Setting Process will direct FCNL’s work for two years beginning in 2017, when we will have a new President and a new Congress. Reports from FCNL indicate that responses were up significantly this year, and we thank the meetings that participated in this worthwhile work. Please contact us if we can help your meeting engage more fully with FCNL’s work.

Selected meeting documents online: http://fcnl.org/events/annual_meeting/2015/report/