

2017 Report: Friends Committee on National Legislation

SAYMA was represented by Charlie Wilton (Berea) and Kate Caldwell (West Knoxville) at FCNL's 2016 annual meeting in Washington, DC, November 10 – 13. The theme: *Spirit Led Action*. To listen to many of the inspiring addresses from FCNL staff and guests, visit: tinyurl.com/fcnl2016 .

SAYMA was one of 25 Yearly Meetings at the meeting. We gathered to worship, lobby and conduct the organization's business. FCNL's General Committee approved legislative priorities to guide our community's advocacy in the 115th Congress. These legislative priorities, available online at fcn.org/priorities, were the result of widening circles of discernment that included input from hundreds of Quaker meetings and churches across the country, discernment by FCNL's Policy Committee, and consideration by the General Committee.

The legislative challenges before us in the current political climate are substantial. But our relationships on Capitol Hill with both Republicans and Democrats, and the relationships that the FCNL network have established, take on new significance. We encourage all Friends to join us in advocacy. Find out how: fcn.org/advocacy .

FCNL is building a sustainable future through a \$15 million capital campaign that is strengthening the foundation of FCNL's lobbying and educational programs. We are now approaching the end of this five-year campaign. We have been fortunate to have a broad base of support from our national community of supporters — individuals, meetings, and churches — who are helping to ensure the future of Quaker advocacy. To find out more about the goals of this campaign, visit: fcn.org/action/capital-campaign . Pledges to the campaign from individuals, monthly meetings, or yearly meetings are invited until June 30 of this year – just until the end of this month. You would then have five years to satisfy the pledge.

When making contributions to FCNL, 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.

As our country struggles with deep divisions, it becomes even more urgent to highlight the value we place in one another. We invite Friends to help shift the narrative and spread a message of love by joining the #LoveThyNeighbor campaign: fcn.org/lovethyneighbor .

Please hold us in the Light this year as we continue to work for the world we seek.

Your SAYMA Representatives to FCNL:

Jane Hiles (Birmingham)

Larry Osborne (West Knoxville)

Charlie Wilton (Berea)

FCNL's Work and Accomplishments in the last year:

Strengthening and Growing our Advocacy Community

Thousands of new advocates are turning to FCNL for action and skills. We're using our decades of experience in relationship-focused advocacy to train and empower people looking to influence and change U.S. policies. This work is bringing concerns for peace and justice to an increasing number of congressional offices. Our Advocacy Teams are thriving in more than 40 communities across the country, and we continue to launch new groups to build durable connections with members of Congress and persuade them to support key legislation. Last year, the number of FCNL community members lobbying in person grew by 50 percent. In combination with our Washington, DC lobby days and online resources and trainings to help people be effective advocates, we expect to exceed this growth in 2017.

Immigration: Welcoming the Stranger

As the Trump administration emphasizes enforcement and militarized borders, FCNL is building bipartisan support in Congress for compassionate immigration policies. FCNL staff chair the Interfaith Immigration Coalition, leading lobbying among the faith community to ensure offices hear these voices strongly. We are working closely with Republican and Democratic senators, including Senators Lindsay Graham (SC) and Richard Durbin (IL), to advance the bipartisan BRIDGE Act to protect young immigrants. The 18 young adults in our Advocacy Corps are organizing in their respective communities and building the groundwork necessary to effect real and lasting policy change. In addition to bringing more than 180 people in to lobby in their local congressional offices, members of the Advocacy Corps are working to shape the media discourse, cultivating a local network of constituent advocates, and developing issue expertise to lend additional credibility to their advocacy moving forward.

Peacebuilding: Promoting U.S. Leadership for Peace

The Trump administration's aggressive foreign policy stances and efforts to increase military spending threaten decades-long efforts on forward-looking prevention of deadly violence. FCNL is working to counteract this trend, and we're partnering with lawmakers like Senator Ben Cardin (MD) to advance peacebuilding initiatives. Administration and congressional decision-makers are reading the report of the bipartisan Experts Committee on Preventing Mass Violence, which we convened last year. The report recommends concrete steps to continue and expand U.S. leadership on preventing mass atrocities. Meanwhile, Republican and Democratic senators are working with us to ask hard questions of the administration and introduce legislation to support U.S. genocide and atrocities prevention efforts.

Religious Freedom: Opposing a Muslim Ban

While President Trump's January executive order effectively banning travel from seven Muslim-majority countries has brought public attention to religious freedom issues, FCNL has been working steadily for nearly two years to raise concerns in Congress about this type of discrimination. We

worked closely with Representative Don Beyer (VA) in 2016 and this year to introduce legislation prohibiting the U.S. from denying admission based on religious beliefs. Our professional lobbyists and a coalition of more than 100 organizations are building strong relationships and cultivating congressional leaders in efforts to make religious discrimination untenable as a policy of the U.S. government.

Economic Justice: Meeting Human Needs

Congressional decisions in 2017 could lay the groundwork to transform the government's role in ensuring access to basic necessities for everyone in the U.S. Our lobbying is focused on stopping the policy changes that are steps along this path. As an organization and through our leadership in faith coalitions, we are part of a national mobilization to emphasize the detrimental effects of repealing the Affordable Care Act without a comparable replacement. At the moment that health care and funding for programs such as Medicaid and SNAP (food stamps) will be before Congress, our Spring Lobby Weekend is bringing more than 400 college students in March 2017 to Washington to lobby on these issues.

Pentagon Spending: Opposing Massive Increases

The Pentagon already consumes nearly \$600 billion in government spending, a sum that is equal to what the next seven countries combined spend on their military forces. Now, President Trump is asking Congress for one of the largest increases in Pentagon spending in our country's history. In Washington, FCNL lobbyists are leaders in focusing attention on Pentagon spending in congressional offices, working directly with staff and through key coalitions. Our Advocacy Teams across the country are meeting with members of Congress to raise the moral choices that we are making as a nation when we increase Pentagon spending at the expense of programs that keep people from falling into poverty and promote peace and diplomacy around the world.

Climate Change: Creating Space for Common Ground

Our moral call for action on climate change has opened a political space in Washington for lawmakers to acknowledge the danger of inaction and discuss positive solutions. In the 114th session of Congress, 17 Republicans cosponsored a resolution that FCNL developed with former Representative Chris Gibson (NY) calling on Congress to act on climate change. We are building support for similar legislation in 2017. Senators and representatives are increasingly interested in joining the bipartisan Climate Solutions Caucus, which brings members together across party lines to discuss ways to move forward on this issue.