

Report from your Reps to FCNL

1 June 2021

FCNL held a virtual annual meeting in November of 2020, and your SAYMA Reps to FCNL attended remotely. Attendance at Annual Meeting grew from around 400 in 2019 to over 800 in 2020, including attendees from Advocacy Corps and Advocacy Teams. (1,500 people in more than 120 teams across the country are now working with Advocacy Teams.) Lobbying was conducted via Zoom, and we had a record number of lobby visits.

SAYMA Reps to FCNL participated in discernment around revisions to the Policy Statement and By-Laws (<https://www.fcnl.org/about/world-we-seek/world-we-seek-statement-legislative-policy>) as well as other business. They also lobbied their legislators, attended issues-oriented workshops conducted by staff experts, participated in or led worship-sharing groups, attended talks by legislators honored by FCNL (former Rep. Deb Haaland, now Secretary of the Interior, and Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand). Attendees participated in diversity training conducted by Freedom Road, an organization that facilitates faith-led approaches to issues of diversity, equity and inclusion. Some helped with the technical needs of the virtual format.

Responses to the virtual format were, overall, positive, although many Friends missed the fellowship of gathering in person. Other friends praised the virtual platform for reducing the Annual Meeting's impact on the environment and for allowing more diversity around physical ability to travel, work conflicts, childcare needs and the expense of travel. A surprising number of attendees said they would attend the following year *only* if a virtual option were provided. Consequently, Friends can look forward to the continuation of the virtual attendance option going forward, even once we resume meeting in person.

Action requested! Despite the pandemic, FCNL's peace and social justice work on Capitol Hill continues vigorously. At this writing, staff especially **request that we contact our Senators in support** of bills that have passed the House and are being debated in the Senate:

- Please ask your Senators to **support S.J. Res. 10**, Sens. Tim Kaine (VA) and Todd Young's (IN) bill to repeal the 1991 and 2002 Iraq Authorizations for the Use of Military Force. These authorizations allow the President to engage in acts of war with no consultation with Congress. They are outdated by 30 and 19 years, respectively; the reasons for their passage no longer obtain; and they remain a temptation to unilateral military strikes as long as they remain in effect.
- Please ask your Senators to **support a strong version of the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act**, which is now being negotiated by a bipartisan group of Senators. FCNL's experts believe it is essential that the legislation contain the following provisions
 1. A ban on chokeholds and no-knock warrants,
 2. Limitations on the transfer of military grade equipment to state and local law enforcement departments,
 3. Raising the use of force standard,
 4. Reforming qualified immunity.

Two notable developments are underway now at FCNL. First, Diane Randall, FCNL's General Secretary announced her intention to retire at the end of this year. The search process for the next General Secretary is well underway.

The other development is a September 2, 2019 agreement under which the FCNL Education Fund assumed responsibility for the ownership and management of William Penn House. Renovations of the 102-year-old structure are underway, with completion anticipated this fall. Educational programs on civic engagement for youth are being considered along with programs for adult groups. The 2020 Report to Yearly Meetings calls the facility “a venue for education and advocacy training” for “Friends and friends.”

As always, please feel free to contact your FCNL Reps with questions or concerns.

Respectfully submitted,

Deni Elliott, Lewisburg, WV

Jane Hiles, Birmingham, AL

Bill Reynolds, Chattanooga, TN

Charlie Wilton, Berea, KY

2021 Report to Yearly Meetings

Dear Friends,

Our Quaker faith and practice call us to work for the peaceful, just, equitable, and sustainable world we seek. Since 1943, the Friends Committee on National Legislation has carried on this witness of the Spirit through action on Capitol Hill. Here are just some of the highlights of this year's work, made possible by your advocacy, engagement, and financial support. Learn more about the legislative impact of FCNL's work at www.fcnl.org/impact.

Advancing the World We Seek, in a Year Shaped by Crises

The **COVID-19 pandemic** shifted both how FCNL works and the urgency of our advocacy to heed God's call to care for people who are vulnerable. Thanks in part to our efforts, COVID-19 relief legislation will cut child poverty in half this year and increase food assistance.

The need to adapt in a pandemic also led to **new opportunities**. A record 700 people joined in our Annual Meeting, nearly half attending for the first time. At that gathering, General Committee members approved legislative priorities for the 117th Congress, a budget that builds on FCNL's strong financial footing, and revised bylaws to allow Friends to be considered for General Committee service regardless of immigration status. Meanwhile, online gathering gave FCNL valuable opportunities to be in community with Friends and offer a new level of trainings and support to Quaker meetings, churches, and gatherings across the country.

This year also brought a **crisis for U.S. democracy and faith in our government**. FCNL is nonpartisan, but we are not neutral about the harm caused when our government pursues racist, nationalist, and militaristic ideologies and practices. The January 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol was only one manifestation of the challenges to our democratic system. FCNL continues to pursue accountability, truth-seeking, and deep listening as we work for change.

The murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and so many other Black Americans by police gave new urgency to FCNL's work on **racial justice**. Between two major FCNL lobby events, more than 1,000 people advocated to end police violence. FCNL advocacy helped restore access to Pell grants for incarcerated people and launch new initiatives to address the crisis of missing and murdered Native women. Internally, we began an intensive focus with staff and governors to address systemic racism and white supremacy as it manifests in our organization.

FCNL also helped move forward **efforts to end support for violent conflict and to make peacebuilding a priority**. President Biden's decision to end support for the Saudi-led war in Yemen is the culmination of years of tireless advocacy by FCNL and our allies. An extension of the New START agreement with Russia continues limits on the number of deployed nuclear weapons in each country, building on FCNL's lobbying to build bipartisan support for the agreement.



A Tumultuous January. Military presence, barricades, and tension were long-lasting reminders of the January 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, leading up to and beyond the inauguration. Photo by Stephen Donahoe/FCNL.

And efforts to repeal the 2002 Authorization for the Use of Military Force moved forward, thanks in large part to the work of more than 1,500 people on FCNL Advocacy Teams around the country who use their power as constituents to make change in Washington.

FCNL continues its decade-long work to press for **bipartisan action on climate change**. We are heartened by executive actions that led the United States to rejoin the Paris Climate Agreement and advance environmental justice initiatives.

We will build on this progress toward a sustainable, low-carbon economy as we bring on a new class of young adult Advocacy Corps organizers this summer, who will focus on building bipartisan support for a price on carbon. They will need your partnership, support, and accompaniment in this work.

Our Strong Community

Advocacy Teams members are just some of the many people who enrich FCNL's work with their time and commitment. We are grateful for the nearly 200 Friends, representing 32 Yearly Meetings and Friends organizations, who govern FCNL as **General Committee** members.

We look forward to welcoming Friends to take part in the **Friend in Washington program** when travel is again safe; we benefit immensely from the seasoned Friends who volunteer on a short-term basis on specific projects and contribute to the spiritual richness of FCNL.

We also recognize the dedication of the people taking part in our **Young Adult programs**—as Young Fellows, Advocacy Corps organizers, interns, and Spring Lobby Weekend participants.

Learn more about young adult program opportunities at www.fcnl.org/youngadult.

Reopening Friends Place on Capitol Hill

The FCNL Education Fund assumed responsibility for ownership and operations of the William Penn House, a guest house on Capitol Hill, in September 2019. (The House continues to be a separate 501(c)(3) charitable organization with its own budget and governance.) We anticipate reopening the space and launching educational programming and advocacy trainings in the coming year.

Recognizing William Penn's history as an enslaver, the William Penn House board approved changing the venue's name to Friends Place on Capitol Hill. With this change, the board affirmed the need to continue reckoning with Quakers' complicity in slavery and racism and to use the facility in service of challenging and dismantling the foundations of white supremacy.

A Bittersweet Transition

FCNL General Secretary Diane Randall has announced she will leave FCNL at the end of 2021. For the past ten years, Diane has fostered FCNL's growth and strength among Friends and on Capitol Hill. When she became the first woman to lead the organization, Diane told us that FCNL "must be bold, strategic, and relentless." Today, we are that and far more.

FCNL has begun a search process to select the next General Secretary. We hope to bring a candidate to the General Committee for approval at Annual Meeting in November 2021.

FCNL's work in the year ahead will be full of challenges and opportunities, both politically and organizationally. We are grateful to have a strong foundation on which to build. Thank you for your prayers, participation, and support, and—above all—for your faithfulness.



Ron Ferguson
Winchester (IN) Friends Church
Clerk, FCNL General Committee