

## NATIONAL ADVOCACY CENTER 2018 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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**Our Advocacy Priorities for 2018**

- Prevent Human Trafficking
- End Domestic Violence
- Fight Poverty
- Promote Comprehensive Immigration Reform
- Push for Full Economic Equality for Women in the Workplace
- Confront Racism
- Protect the Environment
- Secure Adequate Housing for All
- Reduce Gun Violence

[www.gsadvocacy.org/](http://www.gsadvocacy.org/)

Working with other organizations and coalitions, the National Advocacy Center successfully advocated for the passage of the Farm Bill and for criminal justice reform. Certainly, passage of these two major pieces of legislation proves that American democracy can still work when both major political parties unite for the common good. Much remains to be done to end hunger in America and to achieve fairness in our criminal justice system. At the same time, it's important to celebrate our accomplishments.

Passage of the five-year Farm Bill ensured no major changes in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program that provides food for millions of needy families. The Farm Bill will help to provide food security to older adults, single mothers, children, veterans, people in rural communities, and the many people who work but are paid insufficient wages.

*The Formerly Incarcerated Reenter Society Transformed Safely Transitioning Every Person (FIRST STEP) Act* provides relief to thousands of federal inmates and an untold number of future defendants for federal drug crimes. However, this is indeed only the “first step.” With only five percent of the world's population but twenty-five percent of the prison population, the United States is far from the “land of the free.” Currently, our country holds over two million people in jails and prisons, mostly at the state and local levels. To address this issue, we must continue our advocacy to eliminate needless mandatory minimum sentencing. In all, we seek a fairer and less punitive system.

In 2018, the National Advocacy Center sponsored its first Human Trafficking Conference in collaboration with the DC Baptist Convention. With a panel of experts and human trafficking survivors, we provided an overview of both sex and labor trafficking both here and abroad. Unfortunately, as 2018 ended, major pieces of legislation faltered. As we look toward 2019, we will focus on the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act and anti-trafficking legislation.

Further, during 2018 the National Advocacy Center began to focus more on the root causes of migration from Central America. In January, we joined with more than 40 faith leaders in a witness trip to Honduras to stand in solidarity with the people there as they protested a fraudulent presidential election and a corrupt government that brutally repressed peaceful demonstrations. We also have shown our solidarity with the people of Nicaragua as they face a similar political situation. As part of our response, we have endorsed legislation to address these issues.

In terms of U.S. immigration policies, we have supported a path to citizenship for DREAMers (young people who were brought here illegally as children) through petitions, demonstrations, and meetings with legislators. We have opposed the forcible separation of children from their parents at our southern border. Joining with Good Shepherd Sisters in El Paso, Texas, we demonstrated in front of the Tornillo Detention Center where young children were being detained.

As co-coordinator of the Domestic Workshops for the 2018 Ecumenical Advocacy Days Gathering, the National Advocacy Center helped to organize workshops around the theme of immigrants and refugees. The workshops included discussion of LGBTQ asylees, solidarity with refugees and Muslims, immigration and alternatives to detention, and the criminalization of people of color.

The National Advocacy Center continues its efforts to oppose institutional racism and anti-Muslim sentiment. On the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dr. King's assassination, we co-sponsored and participated in a Rally to End Racism held on the National Mall. As member of the core planning group for the WISC (Washington Interfaith Service Community) retreat, we helped organize and participated in the public witness of carrying #EndHate sign as we processed to the Capitol to join in the noon's Islamic prayer service.

To help our fellow citizens make informed decisions for the 2018 election, we worked with seven other national Catholic organizations to issue a voter's guide based on Catholic Social Teaching. We then distributed the guide and posted it on our website.

As we approached the end of 2018, the National Advocacy Center began a fundraising campaign to broaden the base of our financial support. In addition to raising several thousands of dollars, we also have received a commitment to fund a fact-finding visit to El Salvador and Honduras during the early part of 2019. We are very encouraged by the outpouring of support from our friends and colleagues.

The past is prologue. We look forward to continued advocacy during 2019 with our emphasis on serving people living in poverty and on the margin of society.