

NATIONAL ADVOCACY CENTER (NAC) PRIORITIES AND NAC AND U.S. PROVINCE LEADERS SIGN-ONS: January 2023

Prepared by Brigid Lawlor, RGS and Fran Eskin Royer

The NAC Focus Areas for 2023 are taken from the 2022 NAC Survey. Our primary constituents, Sisters and Lay Partners-in-Mission participated. The issues recommended are: Human Trafficking, Immigration, Poverty/Economics, Family including Mental Health and Violence and U.S. policies that affect the Good Shepherd mission worldwide. These issues also address root causes – including but not limited to: Covid-19, environmental degradation, and racism. These areas will be noted at the end of the issue description. We also address significant current issues that indirectly impact the other focus areas.

SIGN ONS by NAC and U.S. Province Leaders

NAC FOCUS AREA: Immigration

ISSUE: REJECT THE HOUSE MAJORITY'S ANTI-IMMIGRANT LEGISLATIVE AGENDA STARTING WITH THE FIRST BILL: BORDER SAFETY AND SECURITY ACT

Content: Letter urging Members of the House of Representatives to vote no on the “Border Safety and Security Act” and on the full slate of anti-immigrant bills to be introduced in coming months.

The “Border Safety and Security Act” would require a wholly unserious and harmful metric to be met before any asylum claim could be entertained, inevitably ending access to asylum at all U.S. borders, even for children. Specifically, the bill would seal off all borders and ports of entry to asylum seekers if Department of Homeland Security (DHS) agents cannot detain or return to Mexico *all* arriving asylum seekers and migrants. This condition is operationally impossible and a recipe for a human rights catastrophe. Moreover, the bill would give DHS broad discretion to ban all asylum access even if this inhumane and impossible condition were somehow achieved.

Sent to: House of Representatives

Sponsored by: Heartland Alliance

ISSUE: RESURRECTING TRUMP-ERA ASYLUM BARS

Content: Letter to President Biden expressing tremendous alarm and condemnation of his administration’s recent announcement of his plan to issue a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) to resurrect Trump-era asylum bans. This announcement marks a full-throated embrace of policies initiated by the prior administration, which by Biden’s own description “contravened our values and caused needless human suffering.” The letter calls on him not to break his campaign promise to end restrictions on asylum seekers traveling through other countries. The Biden administration must adjust course immediately and abandon the misguided pursuit of an asylum ban. The letter urges President Biden not to issue the NPRM on the asylum ban.

Sent to: President Biden

Sponsored by: Human Rights First

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ISSUE: STOP DEPORTATIONS TO HAITI

Content: Letter asking for the U.S. to stop all deportations to Haiti because of current conditions generally and this life-threatening practice of detention. In addition, it contains a request to seek a meeting as an opportunity to address in greater detail the situation confronting Haitian nationals upon their forced return from the U.S., and to address steps the U.S. can and must take to ensure compliance with its international human rights obligations.

Sent to: President Biden, Secretary Mayorkas Secretary of Homeland Security
Sponsored by: Haitian Bridge Alliance

ISSUE: NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULEMAKING (NPRM) (on Asylum)

Content: Letter expresses grave concern about the forthcoming Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) that will set in motion an asylum ban in the form of a rule that bars people from asylum if they enter without inspection or do not seek protection in countries of transit. While the letter recognizes that the Administration's announcement included an action to expand limited pathways to Venezuelans, Cubans, Haitians, and Nicaraguans for humanitarian reasons, the parole process is not an equivalent substitute for access to asylum — nor should it ever be coupled with an expansion of harmful anti-asylum policies like Title 42. The letter urges the Biden administration to withdraw any asylum ban (including an asylum transit ban) from consideration, and instead live out our moral call to restore asylum protections and care for those fleeing oppression and persecution.

Sent to: President Biden, Vice President Harris, Secretary Mayorkas and Secretary Blinken
Sponsored by: Interfaith Immigration Coalition

- Also, US Policies that Affect Our Ministries Worldwide

NAC FOCUS AREA: Poverty/Economics

ISSUE: JOB PROTECTION ACT

Content: Letter supporting the Job Protection Act. The Job Protection Act would improve and strengthen the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), which was signed into law years ago in 1993, and provides eligible workers with up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave to bond with a new child; care for a seriously ill or injured spouse, parent, or child; address their own health condition; or up to 26 weeks to care for a servicemember or address needs related to a family member's deployment.

Sent to: Members of Congress
Sponsored by: National Partnership for Women and Families

- Also, Family

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NAC FOCUS AREA: Family including Mental Health and Violence

ISSUE: COMMUNITY VIOLENCE INTERVENTION FUNDING IN HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS

Content: Letter urging Senators to support House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, and Science appropriation of \$150 million toward Community Violence Intervention; and to earmark up to \$20 million out of the \$150 million for violence interrupters.

Sent to: Senate

Sponsored by: Interfaith Criminal Justice Coalition (ICJC) of Washington Interfaith Staff Community (WISC)

ISSUE: CLOSING GUANTANAMO

Content: Letter urging President Biden to prioritize closing Guantanamo and ending indefinite detention. Guantanamo's harmful impacts go far beyond the traditional "national security" context in which Guantanamo is often discussed.

Recently, there has been some reporting that the Biden administration may consider using – and possibly expanding – the migrant operations center at Guantanamo (which is separate from the detention facility; on the other side of the island) to hold Haitian migrants in the event of mass flight from Haiti, including potential asylum-seekers. The letter also denounces that possibility, noting that the United States unconstitutionally detained Haitian refugees there in deplorable conditions in the early 1990s.

Sent to: President Biden

Sponsored by: National Religious Campaign Against Torture

NAC FOCUS AREA: U.S. Policies That Affect Our Mission Worldwide

ISSUE: PENTAGON SPENDING

Content: Letter asking President Biden and Congress to dramatically cut Pentagon spending in fiscal year 2024 and reinvest that money in our communities. In a year when many members of Congress are pushing for big budget cuts, it's especially important to emphasize that the Pentagon has a lot of extra money, and that we support moving money out of weapons and war and into human needs programs.

Sent to: President Biden and Members of Congress

Sponsored by: Peace & Security Working Group of Washington Interfaith Staff Community (WISC)

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NAC FOCUS AREA: Other Related Areas/Current Events

RACISM

ISSUE: FRED KOREMATSU'S LEGACY AS A CIVIL RIGHTS HERO

Content: Letter of Support to the four members of Congress for their efforts to recognize Fred Korematsu's legacy as a civil rights hero. Accordingly, signers offered endorsement of the following legislation, introduced: (1) Fred Korematsu Congressional Gold Medal Act; (2) Recognizing the importance of establishing a national "Fred Korematsu Day of Civil Liberties and the Constitution"; (3) Korematsu-Takai Civil Liberties Protection Act. Korematsu stood against these unfounded and racist actions. The imprisonment of Americans of Japanese ancestry, and its legal sanction, is now recognized as a grave injustice and a violation of civil liberties. Its basis was rank racism and xenophobia combined with undue deference to the Executive branch, not facts. While the racist basis of the internment decision was discovered in the early 1980s, leading to Korematsu's conviction being overturned after 40 years, the decision remains a dangerous precedent used to justify discrimination against other communities.

Sent to: Representative Takano, Representative Tokuda, Senator Hirono and Senator Duckworth

Sponsored by: Demand Progress

BLASTS TO CONGRESS

Appropriate Funds for Violence Interrupters to Honor Dr. King and Reduce Gun Violence
(included sharing of Road to Justice piece featuring Bronx Rises Against Gun Violence (B.R.A.G), a program of GSS NY)

ACTION ALERTS

Road to Justice: Honoring Dr. King by Reducing Gun Violence *(included piece featuring Bronx Rises Against Gun Violence (B.R.A.G), a program of GSS NY)*

Action Alert: Take Action for Asylum Seekers

OTHER SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES IN WHICH NAC PARTICIPATED:

Capitol Interfaith Prayer Vigil Commemorating the Events of Jan. 6
Jan. 6 Sunrise Vigil - Faithful America, Christians Against Christian Nationalism
WISC Annual Retreat (NAC served on Planning Committee)
January Reflection GS North American Values Team
Ecumenical Advocacy Days 2023 Planning (ongoing)
U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking / NAC Grant Work (ongoing)