

NATIONAL ADVOCACY CENTER (NAC) PRIORITIES AND NAC SIGN-ONS BY U.S. PROVINCE LEADERS: December 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. They are but are 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 which indirectly impact the other focus areas.

SIGN-ONS:

NAC FOCUS AREA: Immigration

ISSUE: REJECT EXTREME ASYLUM RESTRICTIONS

Content: The letter urges the Biden administration and Congress to reject a legislative deal reportedly under consideration by the administration that would pair funding for Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan with extreme and permanent restrictions on the U.S. asylum system.

The policies under consideration include the heightening of the credible fear standard, codification of an asylum transit ban, a "cap" on asylum protections and a dramatic expansion of expedited removals. These provisions would separate families, harm migrants - including children - and would not promote effective border management.

Sent to: The Biden Administration and Members of Congress

Sponsored by: Church World Global

NAC FOCUS AREA: Poverty/Economics

ISSUE: CHILD TAX CREDIT EXPANSION

Content: Letter urges Congress to prioritize expanding the Child Tax Credit (CTC), focusing on low-income children. We hope your organization will sign this letter to show support for prioritizing tax policies to reduce child poverty given efforts to pass a bipartisan tax agreement before the end of the year.

Sent to: Members of Congress

Sponsored by: Coalition on Human Need

ISSUE: OPPOSING INTERNAL REVENUE (IRS) CUTS

Content: Letter underscores the importance of protecting IRS funding. A decade of deep budget cuts left the IRS unable to provide the reliable and accessible customer service taxpayers deserve and to ensure wealthy taxpayers and corporations pay the taxes they legally owe. In 2021, 9 out of 10 taxpayer phone calls to the IRS went unanswered, leaving individuals and small business owners without the help they needed. The impact of the cuts continues to demonstrate the fact that the wealthier get richer while the poor get poorer.

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Sent to: Members of Congress

Sponsored by: Center for Budget and Policy Priorities

ISSUE: HOUSING FUNDING FOR 2024

Content: The Letter asked for the highest possible allocation for housing and homeless assistance programs.

Sent to: Members of Congress

Sponsored by: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

ISSUE: SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN IN SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET

Content: A letter that highlights the harm many proposed policies would have on children and calls on the White House and Congress to reject all of those dangerous proposals.

Sent to: Members of Congress

Sponsored by: Children Thrive Action Network

ISSUE: EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION (EEOC) DATA COLLECTION

Content: Support of the EEOC's pay data collection process and to urge swift reinstatement in light of equal rights for all.

Sent to: Charlotte A. Burrows Chair, U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Sponsored by: Equal Rights Advocates

ISSUE: REJECT DOMESTIC APPROPRIATIONS CUTS

Content: Congress has not agreed on appropriations totals for defense and non-defense. Speaker Johnson and extreme members of the House are seeking substantial cuts that will inflict severe damage to nutrition, housing, education, health care, child care, job training, mental health and substance use treatment, and many other programs. The letter opposes these cuts and opposes poison pill rider language as well, and seeks the Senate funding levels, which are consistent with the deal Congress already agreed to. With some programs running out of funds after January 19 and the rest after February 2, this letter points to prevent a government shutdown and/or harsh cuts.

Sent to: Speaker Johnson, Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader Jeffries

Sponsored by: NDD United, a coalition partner of Coalition on Human Needs (CHN) (Note: NDD refers to "Non-Defense Discretionary" appropriations in the budget— better known as "domestic spending")

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NAC FOCUS AREA: Other Related Areas/Current Events

ISSUE: HAITI CRIMINAL COLLUSION TRANSPARENCY ACT

Content: The letter to Schumer and McConnell to get a vote for S396, the Haiti Criminal Collusion Transparency Act. The legislation is designed to hold gang leaders and their supporters accountable through a variety of means and is one thing that we can do on the US side to address the root causes of the violence.

Sent to: Chuck Schumer, Senate Majority Leader, Mitch McConnell, Senate Minority Leader
Sponsored by: National Haitian-American Elected Officials Network

ISSUE: OPPOSE CENSUS PROPOSAL THAT WOULD REDUCE THE COUNT OF DISABLED PEOPLE BY 40 PERCENT

Content: The devastating new Census Bureau proposal would cut the official rate of disability in the American Community Survey (ACS) by 40 percent, erasing nearly 10 million disabled women and girls from an already-undercounted population.

ACS data is used in making funding determinations for critical resources, services and programs for disabled people related to housing, disaster preparedness and response, energy assistance, veterans' benefits, health care and more. This data is also vital for civil rights enforcement bodies, who rely on it to help identify discriminatory patterns and practices impacting groups of individuals. Tell the Census Bureau why these changes – proposed without sufficient consultation with the disabled community – would harm the disabled community through its notice and comment process. Additionally, this proposal would harm disabled women and girl.

Sent to: Census Bureau
Sponsored by: National Partnership

ISSUE: VICTIMS OF CRIME ACT (VOCA)

Content: Letter to express our strong support for bridge funding to bolster Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grants. VOCA grants are the primary source of federal funding for victim services, including programs supporting victims and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, stalking, human trafficking, elder abuse, community violence, homicide, and other crises.

Sent to: Members of Congress
Sponsored by: Interfaith Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence / Jewish Women International (JWI)

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ACTION ALERTS (Invitation from NAC to Constituents (Sisters, Partners in Mission, GS Agencies, and Friends) to email their members of Congress or the Administration using pre-formatted letters through NAC's advocacy software. Occasionally NAC advocates are asked to issue a public comment to the Administration, sign a petition, or make phone calls to their legislators. Alternatively, advocates are provided information on a cogent social justice issue or event.

ACT TO PROTECT WOMEN AND GIRLS

- Support of the UN 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence and the 2023 themes for increased investment in prevention to eradicate violence against women and girls, NAC encouraged members to contact their senators to invest in the protection of women and girls.

ACT FOR A CEASEFIRE IN GAZA

- Participation in a "call-in" day to the White House to ask President Biden to support an immediate ceasefire in Gaza to end the killings and death; NAC advocates were invited to call the White House – or contact the President via email if lines were busy. (NAC was among the co-sponsors of the effort)

BLASTS TO CONGRESS

In blasts, NAC directly emails Congressional offices or committees, targeting those staff members responsible for the issue of note.

- At the request of the "Dear Colleague" letter leads (Senator Booker and Reps. Underwood, Adams, McBath and Frankel), emailed Democrats in the House and Senate urging them to sign on to a letter to Congressional leadership to continue the longstanding bipartisan tradition of fully funding the WIC program.

PETITIONS

SUPPORT SNAP NOW!

Funds from SNAP are typically distributed and administered through Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) accounts to eligible participants. While we believe that the rights of consumers to access their financial data and to provide new consumer protections should include EBT accounts, currently the Consumer Protection Financial Bureau's (CFPB's) proposed rule on 1033 rule does not protect those accounts.

Sent: As a press release

Sponsored by: Prosperity Now and CLASP

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OTHER ADVOCACY / LOBBYING ACTIVITIES

Advocacy Work with Alliance to End Human Trafficking (formerly USCSAHT) (Joint Grant Work): Planning around educational webinars on three advocacy focus areas (TVPPRA / ITVPRA, Children's Court and faster granting of work VISAs to immigrants), and spring advocacy day – included weekly leadership meetings and periodic meetings with partners.

Coalition Work: Campaign to End U.S. Child Labor (periodic), Coalition on Human Needs (weekly), DC Catholic Coalition (monthly), Domestic Human Needs (Weekly / periodic participation), EAD Leadership Team (monthly) and EAD Subcommittee focused on 2024 Placeholder Event (periodic), Faiths United Against Gun Violence (monthly), Interfaith Immigration Coalition (periodic participation), Justice for Immigrants, Jubilee USA meeting (monthly), Washington Interfaith Staff Community and Heads of Washington Office meeting (monthly)

Attended In-Person Hill Event: Family Economic Mobility: Finding Bipartisan Pathways Forward to Support Pro-Family Policies - Conversation with Senator Bill Cassidy (R-LA) and Senator Maggie Hassan (D-NH) Topics included potential compromises on re-designed family tax policies, including the Child Tax Credit, bipartisan solutions on paid family and medical leave benefits, mental health support for youth and families, and efforts to amend the SSI benefit income limits, which are pushing many disabled Americans into deep poverty. Event also explored workforce innovations, including apprenticeship opportunities, and delved into broader discussions on childcare, housing and rising costs for families, and the pending reauthorization of the Farm Bill, making programs like SNAP and WIC central to the policy conversation.

GOOD SHEPHERD AGENCIES / COMMUNITY BUILDING

- Participation in NAMVT Monthly Reflection
- NAC / Good Shepherd Sisters Silver Spring Holiday Party
- Mission Partners Call focused on Next Steps After Nov. 2023 Gathering
- Zeal Connections Submission

OTHER SIGNIFICANT NAC ACTIVITIES

Attended webinar on COP 28 outcomes (COP is the annual UN climate change conference. This year it was held in oil rich Dubai).