

NATIONAL ADVOCACY CENTER (NAC) PRIORITIES AND NAC SIGN-ONS BY U.S. PROVINCE LEADERS: October 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: HEALTH INSURANCE FOR DACA AND OTHER ELIGIBLE IMMIGRANTS

Content: Last spring, HHS released a proposed rule to make DACA recipients and a few other categories of immigrants eligible for ACA coverage, as well as Medicaid under certain circumstances. Doing so will lead to 100ks of more people getting health insurance and help immigrants thrive. This letter urges President Biden to finalize the proposed rule that would give DACA recipients, as well as certain immigrant children, access to health coverage.

Sent to: President Biden

Sponsored by: National Immigration Law Center, along with the Center for Law and Social Policy, Community Catalyst, Pre-Health Dreamers, Young Invincibles and the United We Dream Network.

ISSUE: RESCIND WAIVER OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND PUBLIC HEALTH LAWS IN FAVOR OF BORDER WALL CONSTRUCTION.

Content: Letter joining the border community and environmental organizations in signing an NGO letter urging the Biden administration to rescind its waiver of 26 environmental and public health laws to rush border wall construction and pause all planning related to the project.

Sent to: President Biden

Sponsored by: Southern Border Org.

ISSUE: FAMILY REUNIFICATION

Content: All families are sacred and belong together. Yet around 4 million people are stranded abroad, separated from their loved ones, as they await a visa.

Right now, the Biden Administration has a critical window of opportunity to facilitate the reunification of families who have been trapped in extensive family visa backlogs for years.

The letter urges the admin to support families by:

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- Reclaiming unused green cards
- Providing parole for people in family-based green card backlogs
- Expanding family reunification parole programs

Sent to: President Biden

Sponsored by: Interfaith Immigration Coalition

NAC FOCUS AREA: Poverty/Economics

ISSUE: THE EARLY CHILDHOOD NUTRITION IMPROVEMENT ACT

Content: The Early Childhood Nutrition Improvement Act, being introduced by Representative Bonamici (D-OR) and Representative Molinaro (R-NY) will:

- Add another meal service to be reimbursed in Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
- Change the payment policy so that family child care programs in CACFP are reimbursed based on "food away from home," the way child care centers' rates are calculated
- Reduce paperwork by simplifying eligibility reporting for for-profit child care centers
- Call on the secretary of United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to review the CACFP serious deficiency process
- Establish an advisory committee on CACFP paperwork

MBST Solutions was seeking organizational support for this bill.

Sent to: House of Representatives

Sponsored by: MBST Solutions (consulting firm focused on the development of family child care policies)

ISSUE: THE CHILD CARE NUTRITION ENHANCEMENT ACT

Content: The Child Care Nutrition Enhancement Act, being introduced by Senator Casey (D-PA) will:

- Provide a 10-cent increase for all eligible meals and snacks in all (Child and Adult Care Food Program) CACFP-participating Head Start, child care centers, and family child care programs
- Eliminate the harmful two-tier system for family child care in CACFP
- Allow family child care providers in CACFP to be reimbursed for meals provided to their own children regardless of their income level
- Make the CACFP payment rate-setting fairer by calculating family child care payments the same as child care center payments, as "food away from home"

MBST Solutions was seeking organizational support for the bill.

Sent to: Members of the Senate

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Sponsored by: MBST Solutions (consulting firm focused on the development of family child care policies)

ISSUE: INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK (IPEF) – Labor and Environmental Standards

Content: Letter to Pres. Biden asking him to insist on strong labor and environmental standards in the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), the president's massive economic plan with 14 countries in the Indo-Pacific region to coordinate trade and supply chains, in an effort to lessen the countries' dependence on China for critical products and allow them to better weather crises like wars, pandemics and climate.

Sent to: President Biden

Sponsored by: NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice

ISSUE: ISRAEL / GAZA LETTER TO BIDEN

Content: A letter from Catholic Organizations urging President Biden to:

1. Publicly call for de-escalation, humanitarian ceasefire, and restraint by all sides.
2. Call on all parties to prioritize the establishment of corridors for humanitarian aid to reach the people in Gaza currently in desperate need of food, water, shelter, medical care, and electricity.
3. Prioritize steps to secure the immediate release of hostages and ensure international protection for civilians.

Sent to: President Biden

Sponsored by: Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, PAX Christi, Justice and Peace Studies - Georgetown University, DC Catholic Coalition

- Also used as a press statement

ISSUE: THE INVESTOR-STATE DISPUTE SETTLEMENT (ISDS) SYSTEM

Content: Letter asking President Biden to remove extreme corporate rights from existing U.S. trade and investment agreements. The *Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS)* system included in various free trade agreements and investment treaties has created a global governance regime that prioritizes corporate rights over those of governments, people, and the planet. ISDS empowers multinational corporations to sue governments in shady unaccountable tribunals over public interest laws that affect their profits and seek unlimited taxpayer money in compensation.

Senator Elizabeth Warren and Representative Lloyd Doggett recently led a powerful letter urging the Biden administration to remove ISDS from existing trade and investment agreements, and additional congressional efforts are underway with similar demands. Civil society initiatives in Europe and across Latin America have been demanding their governments work to end ISDS as well.

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The letter supports this major Biden administration achievement on working for change in this matter while encouraging further progress on an issue with bipartisan appeal – working to remove ISDS rules once and for all from U.S. trade and investment agreements in Latin America.

Sent to: President Biden

Sponsored by: Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch

NAC FOCUS AREA: Other Related Areas

ISSUE: EXECUTIVE BRANCH ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY ACT (H.R. 3642, S. 2270)

Content: Sign-on letter supporting the Executive Branch Accountability and Transparency Act (H.R. 3642, S. 2270). It would create a centralized database for all public ethics records filed by non-career executive branch officials.

Sent to: Members of Congress

Sponsored by: Hedtler-Gaudette of Project on Government Oversight

ISSUE: VOTE NO TO AMENDMENT BUDD #1243

Content: Letter urging the Senate to VOTE NO to Amendment Budd #1243; submitted by Sen. Ted Budd (R-NC) which seeks 'to prohibit the use of funds to implement or enforce Executive Order 14019' set forth in H.R.4366 — Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act 2024, which represents an attack on updates on access to voting. A democracy is a matter of human dignity and engaging in politics to create a more just world is all of our responsibility!

Sent to: Members of the Senate

Sponsored by: Faithful Democracy Coalition

ACTION ALERTS

WHO CARES FOR OUR COMMON HOME

Reflection on Laudato Si' along with a call to sign a Universal Declaration of the Rights of Rivers. Individuals and organizations alike are invited to join this international movement to protect rivers, freshwater ecosystems, and all who depend upon them for their lives and livelihoods. It demonstrates the interconnectedness between creation and us, and calls us to advocate for the earth as we do for those on the margins.

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

PLEASE SUPPORT THE CREATION OF AN IMMGRATION COURT FOR CHILDREN: Blast to House and Senate Immigration LAs and Foreign Policy LAs in select Republican offices that the bill authors (Kids In Need of Defense/KIND) are targeting as co-sponsors.

INTERFAITH STATEMENT ON UKRAINE: Blast to Foreign Policy LAs in the House and Senate promoting a letter to President Biden and Congress from 230 religious leaders calling for Diplomacy and Peacebuilding to generate a Just Peace in Ukraine.

STATEMENTS

NAC Quote in IIC Statement, *Opposition to Border Wall Construction*: "Mr. President, don't build this wall. Our better angels are calling us to expand our welcome of immigrants and refugees who are fleeing violence and extreme danger from increasingly volatile countries. The United States has a long history of welcoming immigrants, and women religious have consistently been on the forefront accompanying and serving immigrant and refugee communities across this country. Building a border wall is not the response we should deliver. We are capable of much more," said Fran Eskin-Royer, Executive Director of the National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd.

NAC Faith Leader Quote for those endorsing #LetAsylumSeekersWork Campaign Launch (H.R. 1325 promotion): "America is known as the land of opportunity. Asylum seekers have fled fear, starvation, violence, and death threats. Once safe in our country, many remain at risk of human trafficking and abuse. Employment offers them security and a way to support themselves and their families. Asylum seekers seek safety. And they seek opportunity. They seek work and independence. However, our antiquated system shuts them out of the workforce for months at a time. The National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd supports HR 1325, which would reduce the work permit wait time of for asylum seekers. It also would reduce unnecessary paperwork for businesses and individuals along with eliminating additional bureaucracy and red tape. Let us welcome asylum seekers and give them access to employment, safety and self-sustainability," said Fran Eskin-Royer, Executive Director of the National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd.

NAC Quote for DC Catholic Coalition PR about Israel / Hamas War: The National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd deplores the violence by Hamas on October 7 in Gaza, and grieves for all the innocent lives lost that day and in the wake of the Israeli response. We are grateful to President Biden for his work for the release of hostages and his words of compassion to those experiencing unimaginable loss. We ask him to extend that compassion with a call for a humanitarian ceasefire and corridor so that the more than 2 million people suffering in Gaza – half of them children – might get the aid they so desperately need. As Pope Francis said, "War erases the future." We join with others in prayer for peace to preserve the future of a land held sacred by so many.

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NAC Quote for Capitol Hill PR about Children’s Court: “The children. Remember the children. Children should not have to leave home. Children should not have to come to a foreign land. Children should not be forced to work. Children should not be trafficked. Children should not get lost in the system. But they do,” said Fran Eskin-Royer, Executive Director of the National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. “The National Advocacy Center works to safeguard children and families and to stop human trafficking. The Sisters and NAC are delighted to support the introduction of the bipartisan Children’s Court Act and to call for its passage. This bill would help break the link between human trafficking and forced migration by protecting unaccompanied children who are innocent and too often caught in the riptide of these two difficult issues.”

POSITION PAPER COMMENTS

The position paper produced by a UN Special Procedure mechanism at the United Nations on **Eliminating discrimination against sex workers and securing their human rights by the Working Group (WG) on discrimination against women and girls** is appalling. It completely ignores international law conventions on the matter of trafficking and prostitution, dishonors the purpose of the Working Group. The 2020 CEDAW Committee General Recommendation No. 38 presents a detailed analysis of the body of international law showing that trafficking for the purpose of exploitation of prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation of women and girls are based on harmful stereotypes, which constitute discrimination against women, violence against women and even amount to torture[4]. However, the WG’s paper bluntly contradicts the international human rights law and standards. The sign-on highlights the areas needing revision.

The comments were sent to the UN Human Rights Council.

- Sister Winifred signed on for the Congregation. Fran signed on for NAC

OTHER ADVOCACY / LOBBYING ACTIVITIES:

Advocacy Work with Alliance to End Human Trafficking (formerly USCSAHT) (Joint Grant Work): Developed Advocacy Plan for 118th Congress based on this project.

Identified three focus areas:

- 1) TVPRA (HR 5856) / ITVPRA (S 920) passage with provisions that address root causes of trafficking and allow migrants to stay safely in home countries, avoiding making treacherous journey to U.S.;
- 2) support for H.R. 1325 that would reduce wait time of migrants for work permits, making them less vulnerable to traffickers;
- 3) Immigration Court Efficiency Act and Children’s Court Act (introduction pending in House and Senate) that would create a child-friendly court for unaccompanied minors, and lead to better protection for these children from exploitation and abuse,

- Drafted email to share plan with Sept 8 Policy Meeting participants
- Meeting with KIND re: Immigration Court Bill
- Meeting with Charlotte Oldham-Moore, Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff about S 920
- Developed talking points and leave behinds for Nov. 6 Advocacy Launch

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Completed and submitted 3rd Quarter Lobbying Report

EAD 2024 Planning: Brainstormed possibilities for 2024 EAD “placeholder” event that would not be as time-consuming for WISC coalition members. Desire is to allow for continuity of programming, especially given it is an election year, but reduce time commitment so that EAD can do more long-term strategic planning about efforts going forward.

Sought Senate support for release of IMF Special Drawing Rights (no-strings-attached funds that don't add to countries debt). The release of these resources in 2021 was attributed to likely saving hundreds of thousands of lives. A new release would help developing countries and protect U.S. jobs. It has no U.S. budget implications. (sought support of Van Hollen, Fetterman, Gillibrand – at request of organizers).

Coalition work: Coalition on Human Needs (weekly), Domestic Human Needs (monthly?), EAD Leadership Team (monthly) Interfaith Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, Ecumenical Advocacy Days Leadership Team (monthly), Faiths United Against Gun Violence (monthly), Jubilee USA meeting (monthly), Washington Interfaith Staff Community and Heads of Washington Office meeting (monthly)

GOOD SHEPHERD AGENCIES / COMMUNITY BUILDING:

Zeal Connections Article: NAC Speaks Out for Common-sense Law to protect Domestic Violence (DV) Victims

OTHER SIGNIFICANT NAC ACTIVITIES:

Created and Shared NAC 3rd Qu Financial Report with U.S. Provincials / Board

Submitted letter of interest with Angela Francis' Fulbright scholarship application, indicating NAC's interest in partnering with her during her time in the U.S., should she receive a scholarship. (*Got notice 10/31 that Angela was not awarded a Fulbright*).

Attended Jewish Women International's Webinar, . “Supreme Court, Guns, & DV: Unpacking U.S. v Rahimi” about upcoming Supreme Court case focused on access to guns for DV perpetrators with a restraining order against them.