

NATIONAL ADVOCACY CENTER PRIORITIES FOR 2016

The Constitution of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd states that "Our commitment to reconciliation demands that we promote justice and peace."

With your active participation, advocacy, and prayers, the National Advocacy Center will continue to:

- *Advocate for programs and policies that help people free themselves from poverty
- *Work to provide a safe haven for immigrants and refugees fleeing poverty and violence
- *Seek an end to domestic violence
- *Ensure full economic equality for women in the workplace
- *Demand legislation and policies to reduce gun violence
- *Work to prevent human trafficking both in the U.S. and overseas
- *Lobby for legislation that will ensure adequate housing for all
- *Help enact legislation and policies to protect the environment

Each issue has a variety of aspects. For example, the issue of poverty includes pressing for tax reform so that the wealthy pay their fair share. To end poverty, we need to increase the minimum wage and protect the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit.

With immigration, in addition to pressing for comprehensive immigration reform, we seek a ban on private prisons that benefit from, and help promulgate, harsh anti-immigration laws. In addition, to reduce the "push factors" related to immigration, we work for the forgiveness of debts of impoverished countries.

In terms of human trafficking, in collaboration with other organizations we support legislation dealing with runaway youth. These children constitute a highly vulnerable population – easy prey for human traffickers.

One issue may impact another issue. For example, in combatting domestic violence, we work to make it more difficult for persons convicted of partner abuse to obtain guns.

Day-to-day priorities may be determined by what legislative action is happening or what legislation "has legs," legislation that needs to be encouraged or stopped. When hundreds of children arrived at our shores from Honduras and other Central America countries, we joined with colleagues in other organizations to oppose legislation that would have reduced protections offered refugees fleeing to our country.

Since we work closely with the Ecumenical Advocacy Days (EAD) Gathering, our priorities may be influenced by the EAD theme. In 2016, the theme centers on racism, class, and power. Although not directly related with the EAD Gathering, mindful of racism and religious intolerance, we co-sponsored a workshop entitled *Islam in America, A conversation on what it means to be Muslim in the U.S.* During 2016, we vow to continue to fight back against all forms of religious intolerance and hateful speech.

In short, our priorities are not just a list of issues but issues that interface with each other and the legislative realities of the moment. However, by listing our priorities we are able to stay focused on the mission of our organization.

And certainly we believe we are being guided by prayer, by our own prayers and the prayers of others -- especially the Contemplative Sisters of the Good Shepherd.

In our search for an economy of inclusion and equality, we are guided by the words of Pope Francis in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* ("The Joy of the Gospel"). He writes, "Today everything comes under the laws of competition and the survival of the fittest, where the powerful feed upon the powerless. As a consequence, masses of people find themselves excluded and marginalized: without work, without possibilities, without any means of escape...Human beings are themselves considered consumer goods to be used and then discarded..."

"To sustain a lifestyle which excludes others, or to sustain enthusiasm for that selfish ideal, a globalization of indifference has developed...Almost without being aware of it, we end up being incapable of feeling compassion at the outcry of the poor, weeping for other people's pain, and feeling a need to help them, as though all this were someone else's responsibility and not our own..."

"The culture of prosperity deadens us; we are thrilled if the market offers us something new to purchase. In the meantime all those lives stunted for lack of opportunity seem a mere spectacle; they fail to move us."

For more information on the work of the National Advocacy Center, please visit us at www.gsadvocacy.org. Also please join us on Twitter and Facebook. Thank you.