

NATIONAL ADVOCACY CENTER PRIORITIES AND NAC SIGN-ONS BY U.S. PROVINCE LEADERS: OCT. 2021

Prepared by Brigid Lawlor, RGS

NAC FOCUS AREA: IMMIGRATION

ISSUE: HALT EFFORTS TO EXPAND IMMIGRATION DETENTION AND TERMINATE CONTRACTS.

General Content: Last week ICE signed contracts with two counties in Pennsylvania to expand ICE detention: one for the Moshannon Valley Correctional Center, a former Bureau of Prisons facility which shut down pursuant to President Biden's executive order on privately operated prisons and another to convert the family detention center in Berks County to an ICE detention center for women only. These contracts contradict Biden's promises to end the use of for-profit detention, including for undocumented immigrants, and bring justice and fairness to the immigration system. We are appalled at the Biden administration's increased use of immigration detention for asylum seekers and community members.

Letter demands that the administration:

- Immediately terminate the contracts signed last week with Clearfield County for the Moshannon Valley facility and Berks County for the Berks facility;
- Halt all other efforts to expand the ICE detention system through any new or extended ICE contracts;
- Apply the Executive Order on privately operated prisons to end immigration detention contracts with private prison companies and local governments; and
- Take significant steps to dismantle the system of mass immigrant incarceration and the use of detention for asylum processing.

Sent to: President Biden and Secretary Mayorkas (Homeland Security)

Sponsored by: National Immigrant Justice Center

ISSUE: NDAA AMENDMENT CONCERNING SANCTIONS ASSESSMENTS

GENERAL CONTENT: The amendment would require the GAO, in consultation with the President and relevant agencies, to submit a report to Congress on the humanitarian impacts of US sanctions, including the ability of civilian populations to access water, food, sanitation, and public health; the impact on the delivery of humanitarian aid and development projects; transparency on licenses applied for, granted, and denied; and an assessment of whether sanctions achieved stated foreign policy goals.

Sent to: Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Inhofe (Senate Armed Service Committee, Chairman Smith, and Ranking Member Roger (Senate Armed Services Committee

Sponsored by: American Friends Service Committee

ISSUE: VISA PROVISION IN THE BUILD BACK BETTER PACKAGE

General Content: Letter urging Congress to support the visa-related provisions in the Build Back Better package. The provisions will begin to clear backlogs and provide

many of our community members the family-based, employment-based, and diversity visas that are long overdue. We can't prolong the failures of our current immigration system and the that the BBB would make truly historic improvements.

Sent to: Members of Congress

Sponsored by: American Immigration Lawyers Association

NAC FOCUS AREA: POVERTY

ISSUE: BILLIONAIRES INCOME TAX AS A FUNDING SOURCE OF THE BUILD BACK BETTER ACT

General Content: Billionaires should start paying their fair share to help fund the BBB plan's investments, which include making health care and housing more affordable; increasing investment in public education, child care, and home- and community-based supports for the elderly and people with disabilities; providing a national, comprehensive paid family and medical leave program; extending the Child Tax Credit expansions that will reduce child poverty by over 40%; and investing in clean energy innovation and jobs. These long-overdue investments will create good-paying jobs, rebuild communities, and expand opportunities for working families. The BBB plan will stimulate long-term economic growth and reduce economic inequality. Importantly, the plan will achieve greater racial equity.

Sent to: Members of Congress

Sponsored by: Americans for Tax Fairness

- Also: Racial Equity

ISSUE: STUDENT DEBT

General Content: In total, more than 40 million Americans owe \$1.5 trillion in federal student loan debt. It slows the economy by burdening young people with huge debts just as they start out their careers. And it's created a massive racial wealth gap. This bills supports the cancelling of student debt. Letter urges President Biden to use his legal authority to cancel up to \$50,000 in student debt for borrowers and put money back in Americans' pockets when they need it most.

Sent to: President Biden

Sponsored by: Progress America

ISSUE: BUILD BACK BETTER ON HOUSING

General Content: The negotiations on Build Back Better are reaching conclusion. One of the outstanding issues that remains is whether to include HOUSING assistance which includes expanding housing choice vouchers, rebuilding our deteriorating stock of public housing investments, and address long term needs through increasing the supply of affordable housing accessible to the lowest income households. Senator Brown's staff is asking for assistance to secure \$200 Billion.

Sent to: President Biden with CC: National Economic Council, U.S. Senate Banking Committee, U.S. House Financial Services Committee, Majority Leader Schumer, and Speaker Nancy Pelosi

Sponsored by: NETWORK

NAC FOCUS AREA: U.S. POLICIES THAT AFFECT GOOD SHEPHERD MISSION

ISSUE: PHILIPPINES HUMAN RIGHTS ACT HR 3884

General Content: We are deeply concerned about the war against farmers, indigenous people, workers, women, human rights defenders and faith leaders in the Philippines under the Duterte regime. We are equally aware of the faithful witness of resistance happening in the Philippines. We are proud supporters of HR 3884, the Philippines Human Rights Act, which has been endorsed by the National Council of Churches in the Philippines.

In solidarity with our partners in the Philippines, we are amplifying the demand to U.S. Congress to suspend US military support of the largest perpetrators of violence in the Philippines -- the military and police. We are requesting your support in signing onto our letter to US Congress in support of the Philippines Human Rights Act.

NOTE: Our action is supported by the Province of Philippines/Japan

Sent to: Members of Congress

Sponsored by: Presbyterian Church, USA

ISSUE: COLOMBIA VISIT BY SECRETARY OF STATE ANTONY BLINKEN

General Content: Letter to Sec. Blinken regarding his visit to Colombia for the high-level bilateral dialogue urging him to use this opportunity to press the Colombian government for progress on flagging peace accord implementation and for actions on critical human rights issues, including improving the dire situation of human rights defenders, advancing the rights of Afro-Colombian and indigenous people, addressing the needs of poor and landless farmers, and confronting the serious problems of police brutality and racial injustice. Specifically, it addresses: Police Brutality, Peace accord implementation and situation of human rights defenders. Insist, as a condition of any future U.S. security assistance, that the Colombian government implement serious police reform, Urge the Colombian government to recommit to fully implementing the peace accords. Express publicly your concerns about the grave dangers faced by Colombian human rights defenders and social leaders and emphasize the importance of their role in building peace and defending the rule of law. Several other US related concerns were also detailed.

Sent to: Secretary of State Antony Blinken

Sponsored by: Latin American Working Group

ISSUE: Human Rights Violations

General Content: This week the U.S. mission at the United Nations Human Rights Council has decided to engage in the negotiations for a legally binding UN Treaty on Business and Human Rights. Currently there is no legal body where communities can seek justice from transnational corporations for human rights violations or environmental crimes. This treaty would change that.

The United States is trying to derail this process. The U.S. mission won't engage in text edits because they oppose the text as a whole. It is not unlike the Trump Administration position. The Trump administration also tried to derail the process. In this case, they are using nicer rhetoric and proposing an alternative process that would be "binding or nonbinding" but far weaker than a legally binding treaty.

Given that President Biden is planning to meet with Pope Francis on Friday it makes sense to offer a letter from Catholic organizations.

Sent to: U.S. Mission at the UN Human Rights Council, President Biden

Sponsored by: Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

- Also, Environmental Degradation

OTHER RELATED AREAS

Explanation of RELATED AREAS (Root Causes, implicated in the Concern, or Current Situation). These would generally be contained within a FOCUS AREA listed above and noted to assist NAC with statistics for grant writing, etc. **COVID-19, ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION, FAMILIES, ANTI-RACISM, VIOLENCE, OTHER**

AREA: DRUG LEGISLATION

ISSUE: Opposition to the Biden-Harris Administration's Recommendations to Congress on Fentanyl-Related Substances

General Content: The most effective ways to address the overdose crisis are evidence-based public health and harm reduction approaches. Such approaches are supported by nearly two-thirds of Americans, who believe drug use should be addressed as a public health issue and not as a criminal justice issue.

Sent to: Speaker Nancy Pelosi, House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer, House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, Chairman Frank Pallone Ranking Member and Cathy McMorris Rodgers House Energy & Commerce Committee, Chairman Jerrold Nadler Ranking Member Jim Jordan House Judiciary Committee

CC: President Joe Biden, The White House; Vice President Kamala Harris, The White House; Attorney General Merrick B. Garland, Department of Justice; Acting Director Regina LaBelle, Office of National Drug Control Policy; Secretary Xavier Becerra, Department of Health and Human Services

Sponsored by: Office of National Affairs Drug Policy Alliance

AREA: ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

ISSUE: THE FOREST ACT

General Content: The FOREST Act will combat illegal deforestation in the supply chain related to agricultural commodities. The initial list will include cocoa, natural rubber (used to make tires), cattle and cattle derived products (leather, etc.), palm oil, and others. Some of these are driving land conflicts and human rights violations in forest dwelling communities. Illegally derived products also undermine US workers and companies.

There is a big role for the US Trade Representative office in enforcement, determining the list of products and deciding whether or not a company is added or removed from a list. There is also a strong role for civil society in providing input and advising on both the list of countries and whether or not they meet the conditions to be in compliance.

Sent to: Members of Congress

Sponsored by: Sisters of Mercy of the Americas

AREA: SENTENCING REFORM

ISSUE: SENTENCING REFORM

General Content: Letter urging the U.S. Senate to take immediate steps to pass important sentencing reform legislation that builds upon the beginning steps taken with the enactment of the 2018 First Step Act. Right now, there are at least three bipartisan sentencing reform proposals, the First Step Implementation Act (S.1014), the COVID-19 Safer Detention Act (S.312), and the Prohibiting Punishment of Acquitted Conduct Act (S.601) that have passed out of the Judiciary Committee and are awaiting a floor vote. Additionally, this legislation also adds COVID-19 vulnerability as a basis for compassionate release, an urgent provision needed to safeguard the lives of elderly individuals as the pandemic continues to ravage federal prisons. It addresses the issue of racial inequality.

Sent to: Majority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader McConnell

Sponsored by: The Festival Center

- Also: Covid -19 and Racial Equity

AREA: PROSTITUTION LEGISLATION

ISSUE: OPPOSING PRO PROSTITUTION IN FEDERAL GOV

General Content: Letter protesting an outrageous, federally sponsored, pro prostitution event that occurred on September 23.

The event was billed as a “listening session” by its sponsors, the Departments of Justice, State, and Health and Human Services. It was an open platform for those who support

FULL decriminalization of the sex trade including brothel owning and sex buying. It was not recorded, so the letter is detailed on why the event was so dangerous.

Sent to: Ms. Chon, Mr. Rothenberg, Ms. Huffman, and Ms. Holl

Sponsored by: World Without Exploitation

AREA: VIOLENCE

ISSUE: FAMILY VIOLENCE PROTECTION AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT ACT (FVPSA) : REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2021

General Content: The bill clarifies that discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity status is sex discrimination and prohibited under the law

Sent to: Members of Congress

Sponsored by: Jewish Women International

AREA: PRISON REFORM

ISSUE: SENTENCING REFORM

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STATEMENTS

JOINT STATEMENTS WITH OTHER ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS

ISSUE: RECALLING AFGHANISTAN AND OPPOSITION TO WAR/VIOLENCE

An organizational sign-on statement reiterating previous asks about the refugee situation and human rights as well as addressing broader opposition to war and violence in light of the October 7 anniversary of the start of the Afghanistan War.

As members of a diverse body of ecumenical and interfaith advocacy organizations, we are committed to seeking a more just and peaceful world for all people. We believe that United States policies, strategies and actions should thus be consistent with human dignity, racial justice, ecological care, and conflict transformation. In our present political context, we are especially concerned for the people of Afghanistan who are currently facing many challenges simultaneously. Many Afghans are being evacuated to the U.S. or fleeing to neighboring countries while those who stay are dealing with threats of violence, drought, food insecurity, and economic downturn.

After 20 years of war and violence, it is evident that military intervention has not been, nor ever will be, the optimum option for restoring peace and stability to conflict areas. Immediate and sustained actions must be taken to mitigate the tremendous suffering and consequences of the occupation in Afghanistan and to ensure that future needless and costly wars are averted.

Initiated by: Washington Interfaith Coalition