

ELCA Advocacy Update

November 2014



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

+ Domestic Violence Awareness + Clean Water Act + Combating human trafficking and child labor
+ Election Day 2014 + Advocacy initiatives from across the country

Washington, D.C.

Stacy Martin, ELCA Advocacy Office

www.elca.org/advocacy



Domestic Violence Awareness Month: In cooperation with ELCA Justice for Women, ELCA Poverty and Justice Ministries, LSA Advocacy, and Women of the ELCA, ELCA Advocacy released a joint [Domestic Violence Awareness Month message](#) and asked Lutherans to [act in support of the International Violence Against Women Act](#). The act, if passed, would make permanent the Office of Global Women's Issues in the State Department and enable the U.S. government to develop better responses to violence against women in humanitarian emergencies and conflicts.

Clean Water Act: This month, ELCA Advocacy urged followers to learn more and [comment on the EPA's proposed Clean Water Rule](#). This past spring, the EPA issued a draft rule that would protect streams and wetlands that connect to larger watersheds ensuring the quality of the water that we depend on for drinking, washing, swimming and fishing. One in three Americans—more than 117 million people—get their drinking water from sources fed by these small and seasonal streams.

Combating human trafficking and child labor: ELCA Advocacy's Network congratulated Kailash Satyarthi, founder of GoodWeave, for being [awarded the Nobel Peace Prize](#). GoodWeave has previously received financial support from the ELCA for its efforts to end child labor in the carpet industry. ELCA Advocacy also encouraged Lutherans to urge Congress to [act on the Business Supply Chain Transparency on Trafficking and Slavery Act](#), which would increase consumer consciousness and address the root causes of child slavery.



Election Day 2014: ELCA Advocacy continued to [promote civic involvement](#) and increasing turnout on Nov. 4, Election Day. As a public church rooted in civic activity and living out spiritual values, the ELCA proudly empowers and supports people to engage with government and policy. Across the country, Lutherans and local religious leaders took the pledge to vote, engaged with their communities through discussion and working to get out the vote. Among the newly elected U.S. senators this year is Joni Ernst of Iowa, a member of the ELCA. Thank you to all who participated in this election and put their values to work!

A prayer for all 2014 candidates and our newly elected officials:

Almighty God, we lift before you all who govern this nation. May those who hold power understand that it is a trust from you to be used, not for personal glory or profit, but for the service of the people. Drive from us cynicism, selfishness and corruption; grant in your mercy just and honest government; and give us grace to live together in unity and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

- Evangelical Lutheran Worship

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California

Mark Carlson, Lutheran Office of Public Policy (LOPP-CA)

www.lopcca.org



November ballot measures: The focus of the Lutheran Office of Public Policy–California (LOPP-CA) for October was on California’s “fourth branch of government,” direct democracy in the form of ballot propositions. LOPP-CA Director Mark Carlson led forums at four congregations, the Southwest California Synod Women of the ELCA convention, and the Sierra Pacific Synod. Proposition 1, a \$7.5 billion water bond placed on the ballot by the Legislature, was a LOPP-CA priority that passed by a 2 to 1 margin in the context of an “exceptional” drought. Voters also approved Proposition 47, an initiative that reduces

lower-level drug possession and property crimes from felonies to misdemeanors. State prison cost savings, estimated by the legislative analyst at potentially \$200 million annually, will be used for mental health and substance abuse services (65 percent), truancy prevention (25 percent), and victims’ services (10 percent). LOPP-CA’s support of this initiative was directly informed by the ELCA’s [“The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries” social statement](#).

The calendar for November includes the annual California Interfaith Power & Light Cool Climate Awards at St. Mary’s Catholic Cathedral in San Francisco on Nov. 12 (three ELCA congregations recognized), a joint meeting of Pacifica and Southwest California Synod bishops and justice leaders, the LOPP-CA Policy Council, the 50th anniversary of SF Night Ministry, and the 60th anniversary of Miracles of Faith Church in Oakland.

Colorado

Peter Severson, Lutheran Advocacy Ministry–Colorado (LAM-CO)

www.lam-co.org

World Hunger: Lutheran Advocacy Ministry–Colorado (LAM-CO) was the official representative for ELCA World Hunger at the Grace Race 5K, presented by Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp, which took place at Sloan’s Lake in Denver on Oct. 4. It was a banner year for participation in the Grace Race, now in its eighth year, and for funds raised to support ELCA World Hunger, which is a granting underwriter for LAM-CO. Thanks to the camp staff staff and all who came out to participate for a great event!

Housing: Affordable housing is a critical issue in Colorado, especially in metro Denver and mountain communities. The 26th annual Housing Colorado NOW! Conference took place in Vail on Oct. 7-10 with a focus on construction of affordable housing, homelessness reduction, and permanent supportive housing services. At the conference, state Sen. Jessie Ulibarri was named one of Housing Colorado’s Legislators of the Year. Ulibarri represents a district that includes the neighborhood in which the Rocky Mountain Synod office is located.

2014 Elections: Colorado voters weighed in on four highly contested ballot measures. Prior to the election, LAM-CO sponsored a voter forum on these ballot measures in partnership with the Colorado Social Legislation Committee and the League of Women Voters. Pro and con sides for each measure were presented by their respective official spokespersons, with time for rebuttals and question-and-answer. The forum was well-attended and well-received.



Rocky Mountain Synod Office of the Bishop staff pledge to vote this election season!



Illinois

Jennifer DeLeon, Lutheran Advocacy-Illinois

www.lutheranadvocacy.org



Immigration was the theme for October. Lutheran Advocacy-Illinois held an informational workshop on temporary driver's licenses for immigrants in Wauconda with Messiah Lutheran Church and conducted presentations on immigration at the Metropolitan Chicago Synod interpreters training and at the Metropolitan Chicago Synodical Women's convention. Lutheran Advocacy-Illinois is also working with The Illinois Faith Leaders for Immigrant Justice in collecting stickers and Spanish-language story Bibles for the migrant children's shelter in

Chicago. The workshops covered a brief history of U.S. immigration and policy and ways to get involved in advocating for immigration reforms, especially for migrant refugee children. In November, Lutheran Advocacy-Illinois will cohost two free workshops on Nov. 8 at St. John's Lutheran Church in Bloomington and on Nov. 15 at Gloria Die Lutheran Church in Downers Grove.

Service: Lutheran Social Services of Illinois and Lutheran Advocacy-Illinois invites you to participate in the upcoming Hands@Work event, where we will be "getting our hands dirty," doing the work of the people of God and making lives better for our neighbors in need. We encourage the participation of everyone.



Lutheran Social Services of Illinois

Hands@Work(shop)

The Hands@Work event offers five topics intended to appeal to a variety of interests, including: disaster preparedness training, public policy advocacy, volunteers, education resources, and local congregation consultation. For more information or to RSVP, contact Joy Medrano at 847-635-4653 or at Joy.Medrano@LSSI.org.

Minnesota

Tammy Walhof, Lutheran Advocacy-Minnesota (LA-MN)

tammy@lcppm.org

Open house and blessing ceremony: On Oct. 9, Lutheran Advocacy-Minnesota (LA-MN) hosted an open house for supporters, participants and partners to celebrate a new name and office space. The accompanying blessing ceremony and prayers not only lifted up LA-MN and its work, but the work of colleagues and partners. It also helped connect people across what sometimes seems like a big divide, as Tammy, LA-MN director, facilitated introductions between affordable housing advocates and environmental groups doing weatherization, or faith folks with science geeks.

Clean energy and jobs: LA-MN is working on a campaign to increase renewable energy standards in Minnesota from 25 percent by 2025, to 40 percent by 2030. (This would mostly be through wind, as a later effort will involve increasing solar from 1.5 percent to 10 percent). The goal also aims to increase the energy efficiency standard from 1.5 percent annually to 2 percent annually.

Homes for All Coalition: A proposed package for affordable housing will likely come in close to \$40 million in Minnesota, and will also include some proposed policy changes to help low-income renters. The details are still being honed.

Elections, candidates education, and voter action – Lutheran Advocacy-MN hosted a candidate briefing on clean energy polling with the Northwestern Minnesota Synod. LA-MN participants continue to contact their legislators about both clean energy and affordable housing.



Nevada

Rev. Mike Patterson, Lutheran Episcopal Advocacy in Nevada www.episcopalnevada.org/

Prisoner re-entry support: In Nevada, the predecessor group, LAMN, worked hard to get the state to provide IDs to inmates on release from prison; a job well done with support coming from many quarters, including the chief justice of the Nevada Supreme Court.

A minor change to legislation in the 2013 session that seemed to enhance the prisoner re-entry program turned out to have tragic unexpected consequences that brought an end to the free ID program. The Department of Motor Vehicles interpreted the new law to absolve them from the ID program and began charging parolees for the cards, and the Department of Corrections kept issuing inmates paperwork they believed was good for a free ID. These issues resulted in finger pointing from various entities. Lutheran Episcopal Advocacy in Nevada (LEAN) became aware of the issue and tried to work a solution, but in the end both departments refused to absorb the costs.

LEAN has now involved a state senator who is willing to amend a bill he has sponsored to rectify the issue, and LEAN has promised support during the 2015 session. LEAN is also working with the chief justice on this issue and looks forward to a successful conclusion. A lesson learned here in Nevada is to always try to look at the unintended consequences of even minor state laws.

New Jersey

Sara Lilja, Lutheran Office of Governmental Ministry–New Jersey logm@njsynod.org

Bail reform: Lutheran Office of Governmental Ministry–New Jersey (LOGM) worked with a coalition of partners to help pass Public Question No. 1, fixing the broken bail system by changing the New Jersey Constitution to allow judges to deny bail to the most dangerous defendants and usher in comprehensive bail reform for all. This new law, in combination with legislation passed earlier this year, means that nonviolent, low-risk people awaiting trial will no longer have to sit in jail simply because they can't afford to pay their bail. Courts will be able to release nonviolent, low-risk people and focus on dangerous individuals.

Earned sick days: Momentum is building for New Jersey to pass legislation that makes it possible for hourly workers to earn three to five sick days a year. Recently, two additional municipalities passed this type of law, and now seven cities in the state have similar legislation in place. LOGM will continue to advance this legislation as it works for sustainable livelihood for all.

New Mexico

Ruth Hoffman, Lutheran Advocacy Ministry–New Mexico

lutheranadvocacynm.org

Immigration: On Oct. 22, Lutheran Advocacy Ministry–New Mexico (LAM-NM) Director Ruth Hoffman visited the immigrant detention center in Artesia as part of a group from the New Mexico Faith Coalition for Immigrant Justice. The detention center at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center has been detaining refugee mothers and children since this summer. Nearly all of the mothers and their children are from El Salvador, Guatemala or Honduras and are escaping violence in their home countries. The facility is comprised of multiple temporary buildings and there is little or no privacy for the mothers and children.



The American Immigration Lawyers Association is working to provide pro bono attorneys to represent the mothers in the legal proceedings that determine whether they can be released on bond and join family



members living in the United States or will be deported to the violence in their home countries. Since the [Pro Bono Project](#) began, many more mothers and their children are getting good legal representation to protect their rights and are being released on bond. Prior to the Pro Bono Project, 200 families were pushed through the system and deported. The week prior to the visit, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) Executive Director Linda Hartke and several others, including Pastor Kirsten Sauey-Hofmann of Trinity Lutheran Church in Hobbs also visited the detention center. *"As people of faith, we believe that vulnerable newcomers deserve better and will continue our call to end this inhumane and unacceptable practice."* — from an LIRS statement about current detention policy.

Pennsylvania

Amy Reumann, Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pa. (LAMPa) www.lutheranadvocacypa.org

School funding: As the 2014 legislative session drew to a close, Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania (LAMPa) participated in the launch of a statewide school funding campaign, helped defeat a tax bill that would have disproportionately burdened the poor and made a final push on a housing trust fund bill that failed but garnered enough support to try again next term. With voters naming education a top priority, we joined more than 40 organizations in [The Campaign for Fair Education Funding](#). Pennsylvania, one of only five states without a public school funding formula, is increasingly burdening struggling communities and widening the achievement gap between wealthy and poor.

Hunger advocacy: Pennsylvania Lutherans also stood with 40 organizations to successfully stop SB76, which would have taxed groceries and other necessities in a move to eliminate all property taxes. Passed out of committee in the last weeks, it died without being voted on by the full Senate, thanks to strong opposition from hunger advocates and others. [LAMPa joined opponents of the bill in a press conference](#).



LAMPa is working to inform synods and congregations following the October passage of the last in a package of [child protection bills](#), requiring background checks for anyone volunteering with children. Additionally, LAMPa joined other hunger groups in a [letter](#) urging the secretary of public welfare to streamline applications for medical assistance and SNAP benefits.

LAMPa welcomes Emma Wagner Nov. 1 as a field education student from the master's program in public leadership at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia.

Virginia

Marco Grimaldo, Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy www.virginiainterfaithcenter.org

General Assembly: The Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy is working this fall to meet with many partners across the state to prepare for the next General Assembly in January. They have met with faith leaders in the context of chapters in various parts of Virginia. Virginia Interfaith Center has also begun meeting in coalition efforts to talk with legislators of both parties who may be important to advocacy work in January.

Hunger task force: Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy is beginning to work with Bishop Jim Mauney's Childhood Hunger Task Force to develop an advocacy message that can reach more Lutherans in Virginia and is well integrated into the broader interests of providing food and help to children in the commonwealth. The first meeting is planned for mid-November.



Washington

Paul Benz, Faith Action Network (FAN)

www.fanwa.org



Planning policy priorities: Faith Action Network (FAN) had its annual meeting with the governor last week and 12 religious leaders (one ELCA bishop was present, Rick Jaech – Southwest Washington Synod). Participants discussed FAN's 2015 legislative agenda and its five policy buckets: reducing wealth inequality, forging a sustainable biennial budget, dismantling the culture of violence, sustaining Washington's environment, affordable housing and preventing homelessness. [Click here](#) to see the entire legislative agenda!

FAN finished six candidate forums with a total attendance of 250 and is still setting interim meetings with advocates and state legislators. FAN will meet its goal of 30 meetings from 22 legislative districts, recruiting just under 120 advocates to participate. FAN's involvement with Initiative 594 (mandating universal background checks for gun sales) concluded with a "Faith March to the Ballot Box." Over 200 people gathered to march to a downtown Seattle ballot box. The issue won with a 60 percent yes-vote and Initiative 591 (the opposing initiative, which prohibited background checks beyond the federal statute) lost with a 55 percent no-vote.



Schedule: FAN has concluded its third programmatic season with the completion of 14 geographic cluster gatherings around the state, where advocacy stories were shared and relationships deepened. Total attendance was just under 150. FAN is looking forward to its fourth and final programmatic season with our Annual Dinner on Nov. 16. The theme is "Acting on the Dream: The Movement Continues."

Wisconsin

Cindy Crane, Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin (LOPPW)

www.lopepw.org

Addressing human trafficking: The LOPPW/Cherish All Children advocacy team met a second time in the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin to discuss organizing a statewide campaign for churches. Dawn Wicklund of the synod's Women of the ELCA council and LOPPW's Diane House are part of the team. LOPPW's director attended a statewide consortium on anti-sex trafficking and joined a sub-committee that addresses federal anti-trafficking efforts. The director prepared a tool kit on advocacy and anti-trafficking for a committee in the La Crosse Area Synod.



A council member from the Northern Great Lakes Synod and the director are organizing a half-day poverty summit with a focus on youth issues (homelessness, trafficking, drugs) in Marinette, where there is an epidemic of heroin addiction. State Rep. John Nygren from Marinette will share his story about his daughter's heroin addiction, legislation he helped to pass on heroin and the importance of advocacy. A Lutheran Social Services case manager will connect youth homelessness, trafficking and drug addiction in a brief talk.

Hunger issues: LOPPW endorsed a referendum about whether Wisc. should take federal money for BadgerCare (Medicaid). LOPPW's director led a forum on hunger issues and advocacy at a church in the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin and at a synod-wide event in the Northern Great Lakes Synod. Also, the director was part of a forum, Faithful Citizenship, hosted by the Lutheran and Catholic campus ministries at UW-Eau Claire.