

Friends Committee on National Legislation Report to Peace and Concerns Standing Committee

The Philadelphia Yearly Meeting- Friends Committee on National Legislation (PYM-FCNL) Network consists of those Friends named by PYM to be their representatives on FCNL's General Committee and other Friends led to nurture FCNL's witness on the hill. We meet by conference call on a regular basis and in one "in face" meeting at FCNL's annual meeting in November. Our main function is to facilitate PYM witness on national legislation directly related to FCNL's Legislative Priorities and to communicate with FCNL staff about the concerns, leadings and witness of PYM Friends. We are grateful for the many PYM Friends who participate in FCNL witness without our knowledge and invite them to join us.

Our witness also seeks to educate members of PYM about the fundamental unity of all of our Testimonies, seeing each as an integral part of the other. In offering FCNL as a model for public action grounded in the Spirit, we hope to heal divisions between contemplative Friends who find public witness uncomfortable or too political and those who see public witness as an essential part of their spiritual life.

OBSERVATIONS AND CHALLENGES

As a group, we are renewed and inspired by the work of FCNL and devote significant time to it. This work brings us joy and gives us the strength to persevere in the face of an increasingly polarized Congress. We value FCNL's commitment to be non-partisan, its grounding in Friends Testimonies and its practice of Quaker governance. We find that the experience of the small group worship sharing sessions at FCNL's Annual Meeting guides the Spirit moving among us in plenary sessions and in informal gatherings. The final meeting for worship, led in the manner of pastoral Friends United Meeting (FUM) Friends, is especially powerful.

Our actions in the past two years reflect a growing sense that we are called to work within a more limited area than throughout the four states which comprise PYM. Although grateful for invitations to visit distant meetings, we find that our time and energy are best spent on local and state levels. That strategy also fits well with FCNL's lobbying efforts.

We continue to seek ways to be more present to PYM at Annual Sessions and help meetings participate more actively in FCNL witness. We also work with PYM's Nominating Committee to seek candidates who are called to active service on our Network and with FCNL. We currently have a brief "job description" of the role and work with PYM's Nominating Committee to identify Friends called to this service.

It remains a constant challenge to engage Young Adult Friends (YAFs) in our work and we are grateful for those who have participated in Spring Lobby Day or attended FCNL's

annual meeting in November. We are delighted that three recent FCNL program assistants are or have been members of PYM.

Although it is difficult to find time for conference calls where all can attend, we find that these calls are fruitful and keep us informed. It is our goal to hold five conference calls throughout the year, although we have not met that goal this year.

We are grateful to the Peace and Concerns Standing Committee for its generous support of our witness and for the work of your liaison, Anne Creter, who has joined us recently and has already been of great help and support.

With gratitude, the named members of the PYM-FCNL Network:

Joan Broadfield – Chester Monthly Meeting
Lance Billingsley – Camden Monthly Meeting
Burt Dallas – Radnor Monthly Meeting
Deb Faulkner – Gwynned Monthly Meeting
Mary Lou Hatcher – Lehigh Valley Monthly Meeting
Margaret Mansfield – Mt. Holly Monthly Meeting
Lee Reinert – Downingtown Monthly Meeting

At the time of this report, we have requested that Nominating Committee consider appointment of the following members, to begin service as PYM representatives to FCNL in August, 2014:

Paul Indorf – Swarthmore Monthly Meeting
Joey Hartmann-Dow – YAF and member of Lehigh Valley Monthly Meeting
Margaret Mansfield – Mt. Holly Monthly Meeting

(Note: One more position remains to be filled to have our full representation on FCNL's General Committee.)

Summary of our work during the 2013 Fiscal Year (July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013)

Total estimated volunteer hours: 1232

Presence at Annual Sessions (Held in Philadelphia)

- Workshop entitled “There is a Spirit... FCNL's Call for Constructive Dialogue
- Exhibit space with FCNL materials at Friends Center

Full Attendance at FCNL's Annual Meeting November 16-18, 2012 by PYM's representatives. In addition, nine other members of PYM attended. Twelve participants in the Quaker Public Policy Institute (lobby training) held November 15 and ten lobby visits to Congressional staff in DC.

Seven in-district, interfaith, lobby visits regarding FCNL's call to conscience campaign to address climate disruption.

- preparation of two handouts for PA and NJ; (see attached)
- participation in monthly FCNL conference calls
- coordination of interfaith delegations and logistics where Friends from nine monthly meetings participated in meetings, letters to Congress and letters to the editor

Five in-district, interfaith, lobby visits regarding the need to reduce the military budget.

- handouts prepared by FCNL staff. The nation's checkbook campaign
- coordination of interfaith delegations and logistics where Friends from five monthly meetings participated in meetings, letters to Congress and letters to the editor.

Formation of a Friends Committee for Delaware Legislation to coordinate FCNL's witness and begin efforts to create a state level lobbying group modeled on FCNL's principles. The Committee first undertook a state-wide discernment of the FCNL legislative priority process, which resulted in a unanimous discernment of four priorities.

Four Network members participated in FCNL's Spring Lobby Weekend, March 17-18, 2013, relating to climate disruption joined by four other PYM Friends. They made seven lobby visits with congressional staff in Delaware, New Jersey and Pennsylvania with the message that addressing climate disruption is an urgent religious and moral imperative. The Network sponsored two YAFs to attend, one from Central Philadelphia and one from Lehigh Valley.

Members visited four monthly meetings to listen to Friends' concerns and describe FCNL's current work.

Summary of our work during the 2014 Fiscal Year

Total estimated volunteer hours: 1062

Presence at Annual Sessions (Muhlenberg College) July 24-28, 2013.

- Workshop on spiritual tools for public witness facilitated by Mary Lou Hatcher
- Joint workshop facilitated by AFSC and FCNL staff (Lucy Duncan and Michael Shank)
- exhibit space with FCNL materials with a special exhibit devoted to climate disruption
- conversation tent to hear from FCNL monthly meeting contacts
- luncheon gatherings to meet FCNL staff member, Michael Shank, and to discuss Quaker issues presently before Congress.

Eight PYM representatives attended FCNL's Annual Meeting, held November 15-17, 2013, joined by eight other PYM Friends. Five participants in Lobby training day, held November 14, with ten lobby visits to Congressional staff.

Network members took part in four in district interfaith lobby visits to follow up on FCNL's call to conscience campaign to address climate disruption.

- coordination of interfaith delegations and logistics where Friends from six monthly meetings participated
- three letters to the editor submitted with one published in the Courier Post.

Network members planned two interfaith in-district lobby visits to seek repeal of the Authorization of the Use of Military Force with the message that federal spending that meets human needs creates more jobs and more effective security than military spending.

Friends in New Jersey's District Four participated in a two week letter writing campaign to Congressman Smith regarding the potential for violence in the Central African Republic. One letter to the editor was published in the Trenton Times.

The Network sponsored one YAF to attend FCNL's Spring Lobby Weekend who made three lobby visits to her Pennsylvania Senators and Representative. Three other PYM Friends also participated in lobby training and meetings with congressional staff. The visits focused on ending the Authorization to Use Military Force, the law which has provided authority for the president to act without congressional approval.

Visits were made to each of the monthly meetings and to the worship group in Delaware to promote a bill which would abolish the death penalty in the State. Friends Committee for Delaware Legislation became part of a coalition of thirty organizations which lobbied for passage of the legislation, and participated in a Lobby Day at the House of Representatives.

To our knowledge, fifteen PYM meetings participated in FCNL's Priorities Process. This year, the PYM FCNL network did not provide support to monthly meetings for this opportunity to guide FCNL's work in a new Congress. Meetings that have participated have said that the process both inspires them and helps ground them in Friends Testimonies.

In addition to our work within PYM, two members are currently serving on FCNL committees.

Margaret Mansfield
mmansfield14@gmail.com