



December 12, 2016

Dear President-elect Trump & Transition Team:

NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice was founded by Catholic Sisters 45 years ago. We are now an organization with members in every State and Congressional District, mostly Catholics but also representing a broad interfaith and non-faith traditions. We work in Washington D.C. to shape policies that improves the lives of those who are too often left out of our economy.

We know that our economy grows when all share in our prosperity. As Pope Francis wrote, we must say “no to an economy of exclusion.” So, we at NETWORK strive for an inclusive economy where all of our people can live in dignity and without fear. We hope you will be a leader that echoes those values and will work with your administration to create an economy that does just that.

We see two specific areas where we can be allies for you in the process of governing.

1. **HOUSING:** There is a crisis in our country with the lack of access to affordable housing. With your background, I’m certain that you understand how construction both stimulates the economy and allows families to live in dignity and security. We, as a nation, have failed to invest in low and moderate cost housing for decades. We see this as an opportunity for you to demonstrate leadership on this issue. Your capacity to galvanize the construction industry to meet the needs in our cities and towns is very important for making the economy thrive.
2. **HEALTHCARE:** We were heartened to hear you say to Leslie Stahl on *60 Minutes* that in your healthcare reform plan no one who is already covered would go one day without health insurance. You promised that in your reform they would receive better, more affordable coverage. We want to work with you to make this promise a reality. No one should have to live in fear that their healthcare will be taken away from them. This is not right in the richest nation on earth. To that end, we look to your leadership to enact a healthcare plan before allowing the current program to be repealed.

We also have other areas that are the focus of our Mend the Gap work, like **TAX JUSTICE** and **FAMILY-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE POLICIES**. I will attach the summary of our policies so that you and your team can see how they work together to grow our economy and build for the future. While working to mend the gaps, NETWORK will continue its advocacy to ensure that current, successful federal programs are protected and enhanced so as not to increase the current divides.

The area in which we have the greatest concern about your administration is in the area of IMMIGRATION. An estimated eleven million immigrants in our nation do not have current visas. Hundreds of thousands of young people were brought here by their parents, and this is the only nation that they call home. Catholic teaching states that we must “welcome the stranger,” and these families are integral parts of our neighborhoods, churches, and economy. We will oppose and resist any effort to detain and/or deport the immigrant members of our community. We urge you to support a way forward that recognizes the true importance of their service to our nation and our economy.

We urge you to know that our nation will be great when all can live secure in basic dignity. It is as Pope Francis told Congress in September, 2015:

“A nation can be considered great when it defends liberty as Lincoln did, when it fosters a culture which enables people to “dream” of full rights for all their brothers and sisters, as Martin Luther King sought to do; when it strives for justice and the cause of the oppressed, as Dorothy Day did by her tireless work; and the fruit of a faith which becomes dialogues and sows peace in the contemplative style of Thomas Merton.”

In this vision we request to work with your administration to “Mend the Gaps” that are tearing our society apart. If you act as the President for the 100%, you will have our support. However, if you promote policies that denigrate the dignity of any human being or put forth policies that exacerbate the income and wealth gaps in our country, we will work to oppose your proposals.

We urge you to govern, not for the partisan edge, but for the common good.

Sincerely,



Sr. Simone Campbell, SSS

Executive Director
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice



Our Policy Vision: Mend the Gaps

Federal policies enacted since 1980 have exacerbated vast economic and social divides in our country. These divides are eroding the very fabric of our society. Enlivened by Pope Francis's challenge, NETWORK renews its more than 40-year commitment to create an economy and a society of inclusion.

Through 2020, NETWORK will focus on promoting policies that mend the gaps and bridge the divides in our country, **with a special focus on the policies that disproportionately impact women and people of color.**

Mending the Wealth and Income Gap

Three sets of policies can help mend the U.S. income and wealth gap:

- ✓ **Tax Justice:** Tax policy changes are made to reduce the income gap, especially the racial/ethnic and gender wealth gaps.

Recommended Policy Proposals:

- Pass legislation that closes the gap in the Earned Income Tax Credit for workers not raising children in their home so that no worker is taxed into poverty.
- Pass legislation that expands the Child Tax Credit making it fully refundable for families living in poverty.
- Pass legislation that makes the tax code more just by ensuring wealthy individuals and large corporations pay their fair share of taxes.
- Pass legislation that closes loopholes that ship jobs and profits abroad and cracks down on corporate inversions.

- ✓ **Living Wages:** National legislation moves from adjusting a minimum wage to creating a living wage.

Recommended Policy Proposals:

- Raise the minimum wage beyond the current \$7.25 to a living wage.
- Ensure that any living wage will adjust with inflation.
- Eliminate the tipped worker category so that all workers can earn a minimum wage consistent with a living wage.

- ✓ **Family-Friendly Workplaces:** The needs of women and families are integrated into federal workplace policies.

Recommended Policy Proposals:

- Enact paid family leave to allow workers to address a serious health concern for themselves or a loved one, or care for the birth of a new child, adopted child, or foster child, without the burden of lost income or job insecurity.
- Require employers to allow employees to earn paid sick time based on the number of hours worked.
- Protect labor organizing and end wage discrimination.
- Support pregnant workers by clarifying reasonable accommodations, requiring an interactive process between employers and pregnant workers, and protecting workers from retaliation, intimidation, or threats for requesting or using an accommodation.
- Encourage flexible schedules to give employees and employers more tools and resources to create mutually beneficial schedules.
- Provide Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) without overly burdensome hurdles or strict work requirements.

Mending the Access Gaps

Economic disparity has created perilous gaps in access to four key areas that burden daily lives and livelihoods:

- ✓ **Access to Democracy:** No individual or community of color is disenfranchised by federal policy.

Recommended Policy Proposals:

- Restore and strengthen the Voting Rights Act to ensure protections of individuals in states with a history of discriminatory restrictions.
- Pass legislation to create Automatic Voter Registration for citizens.
- Support alternative voting measures for individuals who cannot vote in person on Election Day.
- Create a clear, viable path for citizens to challenge discriminatory actions that restrict their right to vote.
- Fully-fund the 2020 census, which includes modernization of process to improve the reliability and quality of data.
- Create just, non-partisan mechanisms for drawing congressional boundaries without regard for party affiliation and eliminate gerrymandering.
- Pass legislation to reform the campaign finance system that limits the amount of money any person, corporation or union can contribute.
- Overturn the Citizens' United decision.

- ✓ **Access to Healthcare:** Racial and economic disparities in healthcare are eliminated.

Recommended Policy Proposals:

- Fully fund the Affordable Care Act with all states expanding Medicaid programs for families and individuals who are eligible under federal law.
- Block efforts to repeal the Affordable Care Act without a responsible alternative enacted simultaneously. There are many things we can do to improve and fix the ACA.
- Stop any efforts to block grant or institute harmful structural changes to Medicaid and Medicare.
- Pass legislation to reauthorize the Children's Health Insurance Program.
- Ensure that healthcare is genuinely affordable and accessible to people of all income levels, with particular concern for the most vulnerable among us—children, people with disabilities, and the elderly.
- Continue to require health insurers to offer comprehensive benefits to everyone, including preventative, primary, acute, mental health, and long-term care services.

- ✓ **Access to Citizenship:** Immigrants are welcomed into the country.

Recommended Policy Proposals:

- Uphold the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program.
- Pass reform legislation that creates a pathway to citizenship for aspiring Americans, strengthens family-based immigration.
- Eliminate discrimination and racial profiling in federal enforcement policies, end unlawful presence bars and ensure human rights protections at the border.
- Significantly reduce the use of detention for immigration enforcement.
- Expand protections for all asylum seekers and unaccompanied children by increasing access to legal counsel and ending family detention.
- Provide legal representation to those seeking asylum and other forms of immigration relief.

- ✓ **Access to Housing:** Everyone has access to safe, affordable housing.

Recommended Policy Proposals:

- Pass legislation to establish a tax credit to help make housing affordable for renters with the lowest incomes.
- Encourage the use of specific tax incentives (Low-income Tax Credit) among housing developers, for both construction and rehabilitation of low income housing units.
- Pass legislation that funds programs to construct new and maintain existing affordable housing units through the National Housing Trust Fund and community development.

- Pass an equitable infrastructure bill that prioritizes investment in low income communities and facilitates accessible public transportation near low-income housing units and shelters so people can efficiently travel to their places of employment.
- Pass legislation that expands the number of housing vouchers.

Protecting Programs that Work

While working to mend the gaps, NETWORK will continue its advocacy to ensure that current, successful federal programs are protected and enhanced so as not to increase the current divides. Such evidence-based government programs are proven to work and need to be supported.