



NETWORK CONNECTION

FOURTH QUARTER 2017

MAKING ROOM FOR EVERYONE TO GROW



**ALSO
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**Sister Kathleen
Mobilizes Sisters
Nationwide**

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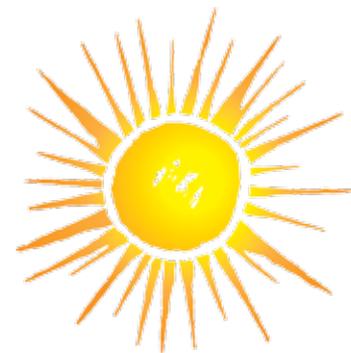
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ON THE COVER

Habitat for Humanity volunteers build new energy efficient houses with low income partner families in Asheville, North Carolina. (JDWFoto / Shutterstock.com)

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Our Challenging National Reality

Facing Our Failure to House Everybody

BY SISTER SIMONE CAMPBELL

I live in Southwest Washington which 13 years ago when I moved in was an undiscovered portion of the District. Rents were affordable. There are housing projects across the street. It was a great multiracial, economically diverse part of town. Then development started with the Nationals' baseball park and high rise luxury condominiums. When I moved in I had a clear view of the palisades on the other side of the Anacostia River. Now we are being hemmed in with construction of unaffordable condos. This has me worried. Where are low wage working families going to live?

This is not only a D.C. phenomenon. All of the cities I have visited have the same story. In Indianapolis at the Immigrant Welcome Center's GED class, I heard of low wage working families being evicted from houses so the owners can sell them to developers. It was impossible for these families to find housing in their old neighborhood and they had to move out of the city.

In Cincinnati's Over-the-Rhine neighborhood, I was shocked when I visited last year for the first time since 2012. The neighborhood is completely changed. New construction and restored historic buildings line the street. When we met with trainees at Venice on Vine restaurant in the old neighborhood, they spoke of how their community had changed. They were no longer able to live in the area. Services for low income families had moved to other areas. It was difficult to commute because public transit is so spotty and set up for the "old city" not the new reality.

In Milwaukee I met Billy and his wife who, after trying to live with their two sons in their car, decided to pool their salaries for rent and use food stamps and the free dining room at St. Benedict the Moor parish to feed their family. In San Jose, Calif., the heart of Silicon Valley, I met parishioners who open their church parking lot/school playground every evening so

that homeless families can park their car in a safe place for the night. Almost all of these "car families" have working parents.

In short, our neighborhoods are transforming before our eyes, and our housing policy cannot handle the current reality. We at NETWORK realized that if we are going to Mend the Gaps in income and wealth disparity, we must address housing policy. There needs to be a new burst of creativity to impact this twenty-first century reality.

Housing is one of those critical issues that has so many ripple effects. The value of housing stock affects property taxes and the amount of money available for local schools. Housing also affects the need for public transit and the ability to be near work. Urban housing policy affects the amount of "green space" and the sense of safety and serenity in a city. Housing affects the ability of families to live free from the fear

of being homeless. In short, housing is at the heart of the health of our nation.

In the United States we pride ourselves on being problem solvers; however we are failing our communities on this housing dilemma. First we must begin to pay attention to what is actually happening in our cities, towns, and neighborhoods. Watch for both creative ideas and continuing problems. Talk to your neighbors and ask your local and federal representatives what they are doing to address our lack of safe, affordable housing.

And hold this issue in your reflective prayer. Let us ask the Spirit the question: "Where are you calling us to act in addressing the housing crisis?" Then share with us what you hear. I believe it will be like Elijah who waited for the word in the loud bluster, thunder, and lightning and heard nothing. It wasn't until the gentle breeze that the word of the Spirit came. Let us as a community be attuned to that "wee small voice" so we might find the way forward for the sake of our struggling family. ☀️



A condo development being constructed in Southwest Washington, D.C.

Notable Quotables

What justice-seekers have been saying this quarter

"Each and every person has a mission, a mandate, and a moral obligation to speak up & stand up for those left out & left behind. #GoodTrouble"

Tweet from Rep. John Lewis (GA-04) (@repjohnlewis)

"If we are to be a government of, for, and by the people, then we need to take into account not just numbers, but the real lives of people."

Sister Susan Rose Francois, CSJP writing an open letter to Speaker Paul Ryan in Global Sisters Report

"I introduced the Dream Act almost 2 decades ago. Strengthened by Dreamers' love of country, I won't let up until it's the law of the land."

Tweet from Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) (@SenatorDurbin)

"God believes in everyone's dignity and worth. Everyone should have access to a life that is abundant and full, and that abundance can only happen when the community is supportive of everyone."

Jessie Smith, of the United Methodist Church General Board of Church and Society quoted in a Think Progress article on the Interfaith Healthcare Vigil

"Christians (and all people) must reject hatred in every form and actively work to dismantle racism in our society and culture."

Tweet from Sister Helen Prejean (@helenprejean) after Charlottesville "Unite the Right" Rally

"Our faith urges us to care for all people and all of creation, especially the most vulnerable."

Text of the letter signed by over 7,000 Catholic sisters urging Senators to vote no on ACA repeal

"The 2020 Census is an opportunity to affirm the presence and worth of our entire population, most especially those who have been left out of the minds and hearts of lawmakers."

Lily Ryan, a NETWORK intern, writing about the importance of a fair and accurate census in a NETWORK blog

"Truth is an inseparable companion of justice and mercy."

Tweet from Pope Francis (@Pontifex)

"Many DACA recipients were brought to this country by their parents to escape persecution. The parallels between their story and Jesus' cannot be denied."

Union Theological Seminary statement condemning President Trump's DACA betrayal

"Today's decision is nothing short of heartless."

Statement from Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago on the rescission of DACA

"I support universal, affordable, accessible, quality health care as a right, not a privilege."

Tweet from Senator Mazie Hirono (D-HI) (@mazihiro)

"The strength of a nation can be measured by the health of its people. A sick people will never be a strong people."

Rev. Traci Blackman, Executive Minister of Justice and Witness Ministries for the United Church of Christ, advocating for access to healthcare

Is Human Dignity Reflected in Our Housing Policy?

Housing Is a Human Right and the Foundation for Life in Community

BY SISTER MARGE CLARK, BVM, AND TRALONNE SHORTER, NETWORK SENIOR GOVERNMENT RELATIONS ADVOCATES

As advocates inspired by Catholic Social Justice, we are called by our faith to “Share our food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need our help.” (Isaiah 58:7). We are all family and thus it is our responsibility to ensure our brothers and sisters live a life of dignity — a human right too often withheld from those experiencing poverty. As we pursue our 2020 vision to Mend the Gaps in our nation, one crucial aspect of our life in community stands out in stark reality: families and individuals need safe and affordable housing in order to succeed.

Since our founding, NETWORK has declared that housing is a human right. This belief is affirmed in the United Nations’ 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but is far from being upheld in U.S. policy. Furthermore, for as long as Catholic sisters have been in the United States, they have worked to house people in need of shelter and continue this mission today. Our nation can and should eliminate homelessness, and should ensure that no one is forced to decide between paying for housing or other vital expenses because of unaffordable housing costs.

Instead, we live in a reality where there is no state where a person working full-time at the federal minimum wage can afford a two-bedroom apartment at the Fair Market Rent.¹ Without quality, safe, affordable housing, homelessness and housing insecurity will continue hurting our communities.

A History of Gaps in Access to Housing

In the 1930s, in response to the Great Depression, the government created the first federal housing assistance programs. Mortgage insurance programs were instituted and public housing was constructed for the first time, and later in 1965, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) was created to build and administer this public housing. When the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968 were

passed, they included protections for people of color and other groups against discrimination in private and public housing. These fair housing provisions have been implemented imperfectly, but advocates have successfully used them to expand access to affordable housing.

In 1973, President Nixon placed a moratorium on all funding for HUD construction of new rental and owner housing and in 1974 Congress passed legislation which made significant changes to housing programs, shifting funds to block grants and increasing the authority granted to local jurisdictions.² This created two programs still in use today: Community Development Block Grants (CDBGs) and Section 8 vouchers. In 1987, in response to rising homelessness, the McKinney Act (later renamed the McKinney-Vento Act) created new housing and social service programs to address homelessness.

Since then, neither Congress nor our presidential administrations have made significant investment in or improvements to housing policy for low income families and extremely low-income families. Establishing the Housing Trust Fund (HTF) in 2008 was one attempt at making up for the funds lost over time, but the HTF ran into financing problems during the recession and only recently provided its first allocation of funds to states last year. Based on this history, it is clear that federal investment in housing has failed to keep pace with growing need, especially with rising income inequality in our nation.

Through the years, we have heard many stories of families and individuals who have benefitted from the housing assistance programs that do serve those who are vulnerable. Housing assistance, however, is not an entitlement, but is instead funded through our federal budget’s discretionary spending and only one in four families receives the assistance they are eligible for. Housing programs help families to live and grow together, and should be available to all who are struggling to find a safe, affordable place for their families.

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Jennifer and her family relied on their network of family and friends for support after her husband suffered an injury at work, but eventually had to move into a shelter while they were waiting on the lengthy process of receiving unemployment and disability insurance. Once her husband recovered and went back to work, Jennifer's family returned to a stable housing situation, but the experience of struggling to find the resources to get her family through their difficult time inspired Jennifer to become a McKinney-Vento liaison to help others struggling with homelessness. Read more: www.networklobby.org/Jennifer

MCKINNEY-VENTO HOMELESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS:

- Provide outreach, shelter, transitional housing, supportive services, short- and medium-term rent subsidies, and permanent housing for people experiencing homelessness
- Serve over 800,000 people every year
- Fund Emergency Solutions Grants, which are distributed to states and larger cities to fund re-housing, homelessness prevention programs, and emergency shelters
- Fund the Continuum of Care, which is a community-based program jointly accessed and administered by a local group of stakeholders to provide transitional and permanent supportive housing
- Reduced homelessness by 28% between 2005 and 2016, despite a still-recovering economy during much of that time³

New Ways to Mend the Housing Gap

In addition to advocating for programs that are currently in place, we must be proactive about supporting and creating good housing policy. The national Housing Trust Fund was supported by NETWORK and other advocates in the early 2000s and is only now beginning to fulfill its function of distributing funds to increase rental housing for extremely low income individuals and families. In 2016, \$174 million was allocated by the national Housing Trust Fund across all 50 states; it is the only



Two years ago, Kiara had a job at a research facility and a college degree, but domestic abuse, family struggles, and a layoff combined to push her off track. Kiara never pictured herself and her children (a five-year-old son and four-year-old daughter) living in a shelter, and said "Shelter life is something a child should never experience." Now, with her children enrolled in early education at Mercy Neighborhood Ministries of Philadelphia, Inc., Kiara is trying to secure permanent affordable housing. Kiara is slowly inching closer to this goal, but it is a slow process in Philadelphia where nearly 12% of the population lives in deep-poverty. Read more: www.networklobby.org/Kiara

PUBLIC HOUSING:

- Consists of 1.1 million units, serving 2.6 million residents across the country
- Is administered by local public housing agencies (PHAs) and paid for through residents' rents and federal HUD funding
- Serves households with an average annual income of \$14,312, 66% of whom qualify as extremely low income, and 39% are families with children
- Has not had new public housing stock built in decades, is susceptible to demolition, and suffers from a lack of funding for repairs, all of which lead to approximately 10,000 units lost annually
- Has demand that far exceeds its supply, with waiting lists that are years long or closed in some areas

dedicated source of funding that exclusively serves people with the lowest incomes in the country.

Finally, we must examine where the federal government spends the most subsidizing housing costs, which is not housing choice vouchers or public housing. Most of our federal housing expenditures are spent helping households through mortgage interest and property tax deductions. This disproportionately benefits homeowners, even though the majority of households with severe housing needs are renters. Housing advocates have



Amy* wanted to escape the unsafe homes of acquaintances where she had been staying and lacked resources to manage her diabetes, so she sought support from the centralized homeless services intake center but was turned away because of her “near-homeless” classification. She had the option to move first to the streets in the middle of a cold Iowa winter, but with her diabetes already taking a toll on her eyesight and mobility, she likely would not have survived a short period of time. Amy was, however, able to receive assistance through the Transitional Housing Program at the Catherine McAuley Center which utilizes both private and public funds, including Community Development Block Grants, to provide comprehensive services to residents. Through this program, Amy was connected with resources to help her manage her health, learned new skills, and built healthy relationships with other women in the program. Read more: www.networklobby.org/Amy

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM:

- Distributed \$3 billion across the country in Fiscal Year 2016
- Requires 70% of funds received to benefit people with low and moderate incomes by meeting one of four criteria:
 1. Rehabilitates a housing unit
 2. Provides a benefit to the area
 3. Serves a limited group of clients (such as domestic violence victims, people with disabilities, migrant farm workers, seniors, and more)
 4. Increases job creation or retention

called for reforming the mortgage interest deduction by reducing the amount of a mortgage eligible for the deduction and converting the deduction into a nonrefundable credit. By reinvesting the resulting savings, we could increase access to affordable housing for the lowest-income families who are severely underserved by the current funding provided to the programs for which they are eligible. It is overdue for our country to do a better job housing our families and communities. Policies can mend the gap in access to housing if we choose.



Brian sustained a traumatic brain injury in 1985 at the age of 20 and underwent years of medical care and rehabilitation. He lived with his family until the mid-90's and had various job trials, but no employment. He did find a mission for himself, giving prevention talks to several thousand high school students. Brian was lauded in the community for sharing his message: “Don’t Drink and Drive – Wear Your Seatbelt.” When it was time for Brian to live on his own, he utilized a housing voucher to reduce his apartment’s rent as well as an aide funded by Medicaid. Today, Brian receives full-time care and his community-based care arrangement, made possible through his housing voucher, gives his family peace of mind. Read more: www.networklobby.org/Brian

HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHERS:

- Were instituted in 1974 to meet the needs of low-income households, and in the 1990s specialized vouchers were established to meet the needs of specific populations including: the elderly (Section 202), people with disabilities (Section 811) and VASH (Vouchers for Veterans)
- Help people with the lowest incomes afford housing in the private market by paying landlords the difference between what the household can afford and the rental cost
- Are utilized by more than 2.2 million households annually, the average income of households receiving vouchers is \$13,568, and 75% of households qualify as extremely low income
- Have demand that far exceeds supply, requiring recipients to join long waiting lists before receiving a voucher

Endnotes

1. Out of Reach Report 2017, National Low Income Housing Coalition, www.nlihc.org/oor
2. *A Brief Historical Overview of Affordable Rental Housing*, National Low Income Housing Coalition Advocates Guide, 2017, p. 1-6, www.nlihc.org/library/guides
3. *A Brief Historical Overview of Affordable Rental Housing*, National Low Income Housing Coalition Advocates Guide, 2017, p. 4-3, www.nlihc.org/library/guides

We Have a Responsibility to Each Other

Housing Shortages and High Costs Hurt Our Community

BY U.S. REPRESENTATIVE DEBBIE DINGELL

Going home at night to a safe and secure home, a place that is a sanctuary, is something we take for granted. Unfortunately, for too many Americans — people we know, friends, neighbors, and individuals we encounter every day — finding affordable, adequate housing is a constant struggle. I have met too many people in the last few years — veterans, single mothers, a cancer victim — who have no stable place to live, who call shelters home for extended periods.

We have a crisis in this country. Today, there is not adequate housing for people with low incomes, and there is a dire shortage for families at the extremely low-income level. One in four low-income families pays more than 70 percent of its income in rent, leaving little money for bills or groceries and often putting them one unexpected expense away from homelessness.

This is unacceptable. Having a place to live is critical to human life and dignity. Like food, utilities, and medicine, housing is a basic necessity that must be prioritized in our nation's federal spending plans. Yet, since 2010, funding to ensure that all human beings have housing has steadily declined. This is the wrong approach.

Our budget is a moral document that reflects our priorities and who we are as a nation. A budget must make meaningful investments in the common good — in our communities and our people.

You are reading this column because you are a caring and engaged member of your community. You understand the responsibility we have to the most vulnerable — to helping the young mother who is working two jobs, but still living at the poverty line, or the veteran looking for a permanent address and a shower so he may seek full-time employment. Community is a powerful tool for the common good, and it is where change, however small, starts.

I had the privilege of being raised as the child of a community. There was a constant flow of Catholic sisters who not only spoke to me of community, but demonstrated it. They showed me the importance of ritual and tradition. They were strong, mature, impressive women who didn't just teach me how to read and write, they taught me what it means to live in a community; helped me learn distinctions between rules and values, between the advantage of being served and the satisfaction of serving; the responsibilities we have to each other and the importance of action.



Rep. Debbie Dingell (center) with Michigan activists

I will never forget what those women taught me — to stand up for what is right; to not be afraid to speak the truth. To remember that we are all human, coming from the same creator and equally deserving of respect. They also taught me that faith is not just acts of charity, but that you can make a difference through activism and participation in the political process.

In times like these — when our values are being put to the test, and when critical programs that families depend upon are at risk — we need community more than ever. We need to raise our voices to fight for housing as a priority in federal spending. We need to increase housing vouchers, promote tax policies that support housing, and fully fund rental assistance programs and Community Development Block Grants. These are critical programs that lift up the most vulnerable among us.

There are many challenges ahead, but what gives me hope is knowing how strong our communities are when we come together. Together, and with God's grace, we must work to protect the most vulnerable, restore economic opportunity and invest in our communities and our people.

Congresswoman Debbie Dingell represents Michigan's 12th District. Her activism and public service were inspired by the values instilled by her Catholic education, and she has a passion for issues important to women and children.

Social Media Advocacy to Mend the Gaps

BY MEHREEN KARIM, NETWORK DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

Today, your voice has more reach than ever. Amplified by social media, we've seen constituent advocacy fuel much of the political and social change we've accomplished in the past decade. From tweeting at members of Congress to viral open-letters, advocacy over social media has unlocked the potential for millions of Americans to communicate with their elected officials, fellow activists, and larger communities across the country. Here are 8 tips for your social media advocacy:

- 1 Facebook and Twitter are the most popular social media networks today, and therefore have the greatest potential for getting your message across.
- 2 Before publishing, consider your intended audience and the exact goal you hope your post accomplishes.
- 3 Share a new perspective. Whether you're reflecting on a current event or supporting a bill in Congress, successful posts are ones that are honest to your lived experience or lift up voices that aren't typically amplified.
- 4 Attach relevant images or visuals to make your post stand out even further. When readers scroll through their news-feeds, an image will draw their attention to your message and connect with them on a deeper level.
- 5 Improve the reach of your posts by using hashtags that identify the issue, campaign, or event you're discussing. (Check NETWORK's accounts to see what hashtags we're using, like #ProtectOurCare or #MendtheGaps)
- 6 If you want to speak directly to a particular member of Congress, tweet at them by using their handle (example: @SpeakerRyan) or comment on their Facebook posts.
- 7 Aside from elected officials, organizations (like NETWORK) love engaging with social media users. Tweet at us (@NETWORKLobby) or mention NETWORK Lobby the next time you're talking about Mending the Gaps on social media!
- 8 Be polite to other social media users; always remember there's a person behind the keyboard and some discussions are better had face-to-face.

Good luck advocating for justice online and don't forget to connect with NETWORK on social media!

Sister Marge Retires

On behalf of the NETWORK staff and Boards past and present, we extend our heartfelt gratitude and congratulations to Sister Marge Clark, BVM on her retirement. For 13 years, Sister Marge has been a treasured member of the NETWORK team and a skilled lobbyist advocating for a federal budget that lives up to our moral obligations. She is well-known on Capitol Hill for her commitment to justice, kindness, and amazing depth of knowledge. Sister Marge, we wish you all the best as you continue your lifelong dedication to social justice and the common good.





Chatting with “CNN Sister” Sister Erica



Sister Erica speaks out against Speaker Ryan's plan to cut taxes for the wealthy at a rally in Washington, D.C.

Recently, Sister Erica Jordan, a Sinsinawa Dominican, visited the NETWORK office. Sister Erica became nationally known as the sister who questioned House Speaker Paul Ryan during his CNN town hall meeting. She asked him to explain how his policies line up with Catholic Social Teaching. NETWORK asked Sister Erica about her advocacy and life as a constituent in Speaker Ryan's district:

CONNECTION: What kind of work are you currently doing and how did you get started? Are there any previous ministries that have influenced you?

SISTER ERICA: I'm currently retired after spending the last 30 years as a teacher and then a principal primarily in Chicago, and always in Latino communities, mainly with people of Mexican heritage. The economically poor schools where I worked have had a profound influence on me, especially the first school I worked at, St. Pius V, located in a neighborhood that was a port of entry for immigrants from Mexico and Central America. That is when I began to learn Spanish and understand the world through a different set of eyes. I had never been in a diverse setting like that. That experience won my heart and gave me a lot of impetus for the work I have done all of my life.

I've also been involved in community anti-racism initiatives since 1988. This has been very formative in my ministry and what I do now. I currently live with two other sisters in a community in Kenosha, Wisconsin, a small city of about 100,000 people. We've collectively decided to dive deep into the politics of Kenosha. We joined a group called CUSH (Congregations United to Serve Humanity), and are part of the immigration taskforce. We are starting an anti-racism initiative as well. Also, we just attended our first meeting for a group called WE (Women Empowered). We are trying to get women candidates for the county common council and city school board. It's an interfaith group, very ethnically diverse. I am excited to be part of that. Who knew there was so much going on in Kenosha!

CONNECTION: You were recently invited to ask a question at Speaker Paul Ryan's town hall meeting. Can you describe how you were invited to speak and what this experience was like for you?

SISTER ERICA: I got into it innocently enough. I got an email from CNN because I am in Paul Ryan's congressional district and I subscribe to his website. They asked me if I would like to attend and what two questions I would want to ask Paul Ryan. I followed up and submitted two questions, one about the Affordable Care Act, the other about Catholic Social Teaching and how he sees his life and work in conjunction with that. CNN chose the latter question.

At the town hall, I started out by telling him that I I knew he was Catholic as am I, and that the Republicans in Congress right now are not standing with the poor and the working class. There is great evidence for that in the debate about the Affordable Care Act and the upcoming tax reform plan. I asked how he saw himself being consistent with Catholic Social Teaching while moving forward with his budget in the Congress. He responded by saying he agreed with me, but we did not agree on the means to achieve the end goal. The CNN town hall was very controlled in terms of time so there was no time for any of the questioners to have a dialogue with him. I felt patronized and like he skirted around the question. He never mentioned anything about the Affordable Care Act in his response. At a recent press conference [on Tax Justice] in D.C., I was able to deliver the message that I would have liked to deliver to him personally.



Jordan, OP

CONNECTION: What was the message you delivered?

SISTER ERICA: He [Paul Ryan] always talks about his constituents being his employer and how he is working on our behalf. I wanted him to know as his employer that I am very dissatisfied with the proposals that he is moving forward in the Congress with tax reform. I think it is an unconscionable thing to plan to give tax breaks to wealthy businesses, individuals, and corporations and to take away programs for the poor and working class people of our country. It is not okay with me that he wants to take away Medicare, Medicaid, food programs for hungry kids, and all the other programs on the chopping block to give favorable tax benefits to the wealthy. I also said I had been a principal in poor neighborhoods for 30 years and that I knew what it meant for parents to be able to count on breakfast and lunch provided at school for their children. I often worried about the kids' nutrition on weekends and during vacation. I also said that I knew how hard it was for parents to leave their kids home sick, unattended, because of fear of losing their jobs. I feel the role of government is to seek the common good for all citizens, especially the poor and vulnerable who have a claim on us and the resources in our country. I think we should speak up and let our legislators know what we believe is right.

CONNECTION: Do you have any advice for advocates engaging in discussions on faith and politics in our current situation?

SISTER ERICA: The simple answer is that we all need to speak up. We need to show up at places where people are gathered to make a difference, such as rallies or at meetings where we have an opportunity to talk civilly with our legislators. We need to be fearless about this. This is about our faith and how we are asked to live. It is not an option, I believe, to not get engaged in these issues that have such a bearing on human life. Involvement is essential.



Fr. Joe Nagle, OFM and residents of Assisi House in Washington, D.C.

NETWORK Members Call on Congress to Protect Dreamers

“We called our Senators and Congressman and also had a rally here in Des Moines today in front of the Federal Building — good turnout and lots of energy!”

Sister Jeanie Hagedorn, CHM, Des Moines, IA

“I have called my Senators and my Congressional Representative in support of DACA and of S.1615 “Dream Act” and H.R. 3591 Gutierrez “American Hope Act.” Going to a local demonstration for DACA in Santa Ana tonight!”

Bobi Keenan, Santa Ana, CA

“Thought you might enjoy hearing that over 200 citizens gathered in support of Dreamers and DACA. We made our calls and joined our voices.”

Lillian and John Moskeland, Centerville, OH

“I attended a DACA rally held in Medford. It was sponsored by UNETE (Center for Farm Worker Advocacy) of Medford and the call went out to all local groups, including the Oregon District 2 Indivisible.”

Cathy Egelston, Medford, OR



Diana Pliego Padilla, former NETWORK Associate, calls on Congress to pass the Dream Act



The Long Wait

By Will O'Brien

Wes Mitchell arrived at Fairmount Avenue on June 1 at 6:00 am, ready to help. But he was not ready for what he saw. “I was stunned. The line was already around the block.” He knew it would be a big crowd, but he hadn’t quite imagined this. Wes, a resident at Project HOME’s Francis House of Peace, was going to work with those in line who were applying for our new residence.

The new residence at 2415 N. Broad Street, which opens this fall, provides 88 units of permanent, affordable supportive housing for persons who have experienced homelessness as well as low-income individuals. We knew, from previous experience, that applications would far exceed the number of available units.

By the time doors opened to receive applicants, the line was several blocks long, with hundreds of persons hoping for the chance for the long-desired decent roof over their heads. It was a snapshot of a part of America that we rarely want to acknowledge — elderly, young, women with children, persons with disabilities — victims of an economic system in which many people are disposable.

Each person in the line had a story, but those stories carried some common threads: Women leaving situations of domestic abuse. Many people with disabilities, some who had faced discrimination and even abuse in current housing situations. And people who had already been on waiting lists for other housing for many years.

Most of the applicants were simply trapped in the harsh squeeze of fixed or low incomes in the face of rising rents. Several people remarked on all the housing going up — but, as one woman put it, “It’s not for us!” In fact, the higher-income housing development is inflating rents for many already struggling with poverty. “Nobody can afford the rising rents,” said a man named George. “No one’s income is going up. I work two jobs and have kids, and we can’t afford it.”

As the lines get longer, the resources get slimmer, federal public policy gets stingier, and attitudes of public officials get colder.

More than a thousand persons applied for affordable housing at 2415 N. Broad Street. Project HOME will welcome 88 new persons into our community. More than 900 others will have to fill out other applications, wait in more lines, stir up slim hopes again. We at Project HOME are doing the best we can, with more housing projects planned over the next few years. But as a nation we can and must do better.

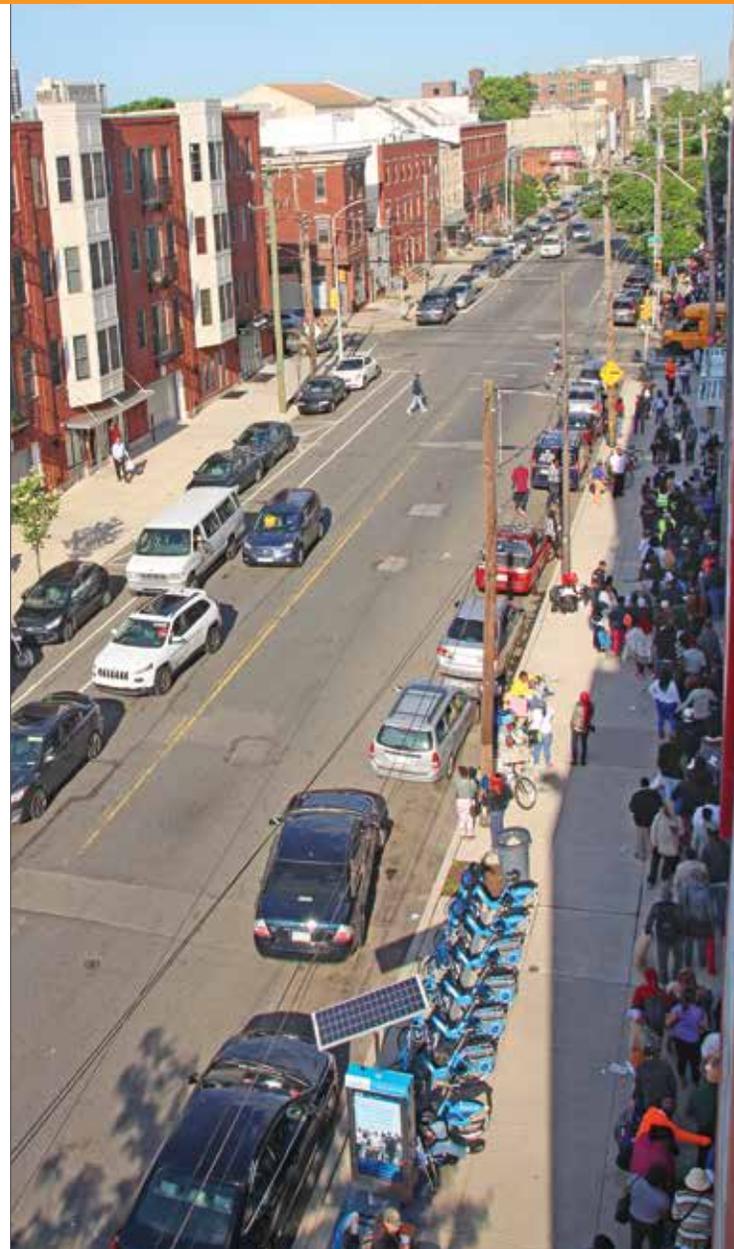


Photo: Rachel Ehrgood

Since its beginning in 1989, Project HOME has been a leader in providing comprehensive and effective services to persons who experience chronic homelessness in Philadelphia. Project HOME has also been a leader in Philadelphia in responding to the root causes of homelessness by helping to rebuild low-income neighborhoods and by engaging in political advocacy to bring about positive public policies for low-income and homeless persons. In 2016 Project HOME opened the 94-unit Francis House of Peace named in honor of Pope Francis’s visit to Philadelphia. Learn more at www.projecthome.org.

This story was originally published in the Summer 2017 edition of Project HOME’s News from HOME newsletter.



Sisters Write in Support of a Faithful Budget

By Meg Olson, NETWORK Grassroots Mobilization Manager

In 2012, NETWORK strongly opposed the House-approved “Paul Ryan budget” that was balanced on the backs of low-income families and decimated human needs programs. Five years later, Speaker Ryan still has not received the message that our nation deserves a budget that benefits the 100% — not one that is built upon massive tax breaks for corporations and billionaires while cutting Medicaid, Medicare, and other services for working families. So, once again Catholic Sisters are raising their voices in opposition to an immoral federal budget.

All summer and into the fall, sisters have been writing letters to Speaker Ryan highlighting their concerns about specific programs impacted by the Trump budget, sharing their lived experiences with the communities who will be affected by deep budget cuts, and reminding Speaker Ryan that a fair and moral budget is one of the cornerstones of our shared Catholic Social Tradition. NETWORK did not come up with this idea for sisters to write letters to Speaker Ryan about the federal budget on our own, however. Last spring, Sister Kathleen Kanet, RSHM, called our office, shared her vision with us, and asked for our help to make this happen.

The idea came to her through prayer, but for Sister Kathleen this project is not just about impacting public policy, but also about nourishing sisters. In her efforts to mobilize her religious community, Kathleen is facilitating a three-part workshop at the Marymount Convent in Tarrytown, New York, which serves as a home for many of the Eastern American province’s retired and/or chronically ill sisters. The sisters who live at Marymount Convent may no longer be able to serve overseas or march in the streets, but they care deeply about social justice, and writing a letter to Speaker Ryan about the budget is a meaningful opportunity for them to engage in advocacy. One of the sisters, who is blind, has decided that she will dictate her message to one of her sisters who will write it down.

At the first session of the workshop, sisters gathered to learn about the project, share their social justice passions and concerns, and brainstorm issues impacted by the federal budget to write about in their letters. During the second session, the sisters gathered again to review NETWORK’s federal budget resources. Using practices for High Quality Dialogue, the sisters also had an opportunity to comment on the process of writing the letters and on NETWORK’s Mend the Gap policy



Sisters gather to discuss their concerns for the country and work on their letters to Speaker Paul Ryan

priorities. In the third session, the sisters will write their letters to Speaker Ryan. NETWORK is grateful to Sister Kathleen Kanet for asking us to be a partner in this campaign, and we are looking forward to receiving the letters from her community and from sisters all over the country and delivering them to Speaker Paul Ryan.



2017–2018 ASSOCIATES

Jeremiah Pennebaker, Sana Rizvi, Kaitlin Brown, Claudia Brock, and Mary Cunningham

NETWORK Welcomes New Staff

NETWORK was thrilled to welcome nine new members to our team this summer. Our new staff include Tralonne Shorter and Mehreen Karim (joining the Government Relations and Communications teams), and two fellows, Sister Quincy Howard, OP and Sister Janet Yurkanin, IHM (joining the Government Relations and Development teams). We also have five new associates: Claudia Brock, Kaitlin Brown, Mary Cunningham, Jeremiah Pennebaker, and Sana Rizvi, joining NETWORK for the year. In the short time they have been with us, all of our new staff members have already shared a wide variety of gifts and an inspiring commitment to social justice. We are grateful to have them working for justice with us!

Healthcare Roller Coaster Continues on Capitol Hill, It's Time for Congress to Protect Dreamers

An update from D.C. on key votes held during the past quarter and social justice issues on the horizon



Key Vote: Healthcare

This summer, NETWORK and the Interfaith Healthcare Coalition mobilized to oppose multiple disastrous bills that would repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and cause tens of millions of people to lose health coverage. With numerous Hill meetings, events in key states, a 23-hour vigil outside the Capitol Building, and a letter from 7,150 Catholic sisters, we did not rest until all proposals were voted down. We are especially grateful for the 46 Democratic Senators, two Independent Senators, and three Republican Senators—Senators Susan Collins (R-ME), John McCain (R-AZ), and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)—who provided the 51 “nay” votes needed to stop the immoral ACA repeal bill in the Senate.

August and September were promising months for healthcare legislation in a Congress that has been woefully partisan. Members worked across the aisle to negotiate legislation to extend the Children’s Health Insurance Program and stabilize the ACA individual marketplace. These negotiations provided a glimpse of Congress as it should be — working together for the common good through an open, deliberative process. Unfortunately, Senate Republicans decided to put these bills aside and return to a last-ditch effort to repeal the ACA. We urge Congress to return to bipartisan work to expand access to healthcare, not take it away.



On the Horizon: Immigration

On September 5, President Trump pulled the rug from beneath immigrant families by rescinding Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), a program enacted by President Obama in 2012 to protect undocumented young people from deportation. This decision puts 800,000 DACA recipients’ lives on the line by ending the program over a six month period, and families are grieving and preparing for the worst. DACA was a life-changing opportunity for its recipients who put their faith in our government and gave their personal information, records, and hundreds of dollars in fees for the chance to stay in the country they call home.

The time has come for Congress to act to protect Dreamers and create a pathway to citizenship for them. NETWORK wholeheartedly endorses the Dream Act, a bipartisan solution for DACA recipients that continues protecting them from deportation and offers them a path to citizenship. We ask Congress to pass the Dream Act without attaching the bill to an increase in funding for deportations, detention, or border militarization. Dreamers do not want to receive protection at the cost of increasing the risk of deportation for their parents and family. Our faith teaches us to value, welcome, and protect families, not tear them apart. To do this, Congress must pass the Dream Act.

NETWORK—a Catholic leader in the global movement for justice and peace—educates, organizes, and lobbies for economic and social transformation.

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Thoughtful and Inspiring NETWORK Survey Comments!

Recently many of you, our members, answered a NETWORK survey telling us how you feel about being a member and what motivates you to give. We are excited about the results and want to share some of your comments.

"It would be impossible not to be a member after so many years. You are where I want to be. Your values are mine."

"I wanted to be able to advocate for Catholic Social Justice issues with confidence — I didn't have the knowledge or expertise to know what bills in Congress to support. I chose to use the expertise of the NETWORK Justice educated persons."

"NETWORK involves all of my justice and immigration concerns. You speak for me on the front lines where I can't always be. God bless you for speaking the truth in love."

"I am motivated by the fact that NETWORK's stance is through the lens of Catholic social justice and intersects with other faith traditions in carrying out its work. I think it is critical that the Catholic faith tradition has an organization such as NETWORK where the Catholic moral voice is proclaimed. This has been consistently demonstrated through NETWORK's lobbying and education in these critical social justice issues."

"I like knowing what bills are coming up and NETWORK's position on each and the "why" for each. So I like getting an email about that such as the immigration and "wall" and a phone number. I want to know before the vote, what the issues are. I also really like the hard copy chart that arrives [in Connection] listing names of Senators and Congress persons and how they voted."

"Several times I have been struck by your hopefulness in times of almost despair. I especially loved the message after President Trump won the election. I try to strive for these attitudes in my life, and I feel a real companionship with you."

Your encouraging thoughts are appreciated, and with your support, we will continue to tirelessly pursue justice and peace for our members. Help us strive for continued social change in 2018!





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Interfaith Vigil for Healthcare **23 Hours of Prayer, Testimony, and Witness**

For 23 hours during the Interfaith Prayer Vigil for Healthcare, people of different faiths were all united in the mission to love our neighbor and to pray, sing, and speak out against the House and Senate bills to repeal the Affordable Care Act. As Matthew 18:20 says, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." God's presence was apparent on that Capitol lawn- in the people present, the stories shared, the songs sung, the prayers cried out, and in the silence of our hearts. While we were surrounded by powerful political institutions, the true power that night was on the patch of grass that held the hearts of those advocating for the human right of healthcare.

To read the full reflection visit
www.networklobby.org/vigil

