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**Catholic Lobby Welcomes First Deputy Executive Director and Chief Equity Officer**

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, NETWORK is pleased to announce the appointment of Joan F. Neal as Deputy Executive Director and Chief Equity Officer. She is the first person to serve in this role and brings her proven leadership and management experience to NETWORK's mission and organizational development. Prior to serving in this role, Ms. Neal made significant contributions to NETWORK as a consultant for strategic planning and racial justice, and as a Government Relations Fellow advocating for reforms of the U.S. criminal legal system.

"I look forward to further developing NETWORK's unique strategy of effecting change by applying Gospel values and the framework of Catholic Social Tradition to federal policies and practices. NETWORK has been a groundbreaking advocacy organization for nearly 50 years, laying a moral claim on the soul of our nation by equipping Catholic Sisters and NETWORK supporters to directly lobby their elected officials," **said Joan F. Neal.**

"My commitment to working for racial, economic, and social justice is rooted in my Catholic faith and my identity as a Black Catholic woman in the U.S." **Joan continued.** "I honor the commitment and persistence of Black Catholics who call on our nation and our Church to live up to their stated values."

**NETWORK Executive Director, Mary J. Novak, said:** "Joan brings a wealth of experience developing organizational strategy, a powerful commitment to racial justice, and her own deep wisdom to this new role at NETWORK. I am thrilled to have her on our leadership team as NETWORK enters its next chapter."

Joan Neal is an Associate Member of the National Black Sisters Conference, and holds a Master of Arts in Pastoral Studies from the Catholic Theological Union where she is also a Life Trustee. She currently serves as a member of the Board of the Sister Thea Bowman Foundation (Chicago), the Center for Migration Studies (New York), the Mexican American Catholic College (San Antonio), and the Mission Committee of the Board of the University of the Incarnate Word (San Antonio).

Formerly, Joan Neal served as Vice President, Institutional Planning and Effectiveness and Chief Planning Officer at Cabrini College, in Radnor, Pennsylvania, and as Executive Vice President at Catholic Relief Services (CRS) where she founded and led CRS' U.S. Operations Division and directed CRS' national public policy and legislative advocacy. Before relocating to the East Coast, Ms. Neal served as Associate Director of Leadership Greater Chicago, Vice President of Public Affairs at Harris Bank, and Vice President and Branch Manager at First National Bank of Chicago.

Founded in December 1971, NETWORK was formed when a group of Catholic Sisters felt the need to collaborate and engage in political ministry around social justice on the federal level. NETWORK's community now includes tens of thousands of individuals from all walks of life united in answering the call for justice.

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*NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice – advocates for justice inspired by Catholic Sisters – educates, organizes, and lobbies for economic and social transformation. They have a nearly 50-year track record of lobbying for critical federal programs that support those at the margins and prioritize the common good. [www.networklobby.org](http://www.networklobby.org)*