

# Report to the New Association of Friends on the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) Annual Meeting held in Washington DC

November 20-23, 2014

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I appreciated the opportunity to represent the New Association at the FCNL Annual Meeting. It is an organization with which I had a close association both as an Executive Committee member and later as a staff member in the 1990's. I was especially happy to see that two programs I started many years ago (the Young Adult Program, and the Peaceful Prevention of Armed Conflict program) have grown substantially—far beyond what I can take credit for.

There was a good deal of interest and good will for the New Association of Friends, and many people sent their greetings. FCNL has broad participation across the diversity of Friends. All of the FUM Meetings in the US were represented, except Indiana YM, which has recently withdrawn from FCNL. (I believe that all of the FGC Affiliated YMs and all 3 Conservative YM's were also represented, along with individuals from 2 Evangelical YMs). The USFWI, the American Friends Service Committee, Friends United Meeting, Quaker Earthcare Witness also had representatives.

The meeting was generally organized around three purposes:

Preceding the Annual Meeting there was a **Quaker Public Policy Institute**, which enabled those attending the Annual Meeting and other Friends to be trained and participate as citizen lobbyists. Over 400 Friends participated. The focus of the lobbying visits was urging Congress to let diplomacy work to resolve the conflict with Iran. Later in the Annual Meeting there was a training session on Grassroots Lobbying at home in our Districts. Due to other commitments I was not able to attend until Friday night.

The **Annual Meeting for Business** which (a) reviewed and set the policy priorities that will guide the staff in its work with the new Congress; (b) reviewed the finances of FCNL and the FCNL Education Fund and approved the budget and a new capital campaign; and (c) reviewed and approved nominations for standing committees and officers. About 300 Friends were present for the business sessions.

Third, we **heard presentations that inspired us**. Parker Palmer gave a presentation on "Healing the Heart of Democracy" on Thursday night. On Friday evening we heard stories of powerful lobbying by both adults and children and shared our own experiences. Saturday was the always inspiring evening presentation by the young adult program associates (formerly called Interns) who shared their experiences working with FCNL Lobbyists over the past year. During the Business Meeting, we held a Memorial Meeting where we remembered FCNL Friends whom we had lost. On Sunday morning there was a Spirit-filled morning worship led by Jennie Isbell of New England YM.

Information and some of the talks are available on the FCNL website. Go to the [www.fcnl.org](http://www.fcnl.org) and

Here are more details on the Annual Meeting.

Legislative Priorities for the new Congress: At the beginning of each new Congress, the Annual Meeting sets lobbying priorities based on the input received from Friends meetings and churches, organizations and individuals around the US. It is always a balance to provide flexibility to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities or crises, while still providing real guidance on priorities that don't expect staff to do everything. The Policy Committee, chaired by Ron Ferguson, worked over the past year reviewing input from 167 Friends Meetings and organizations and presented a draft set of priorities. On Friday, Friends had the opportunity to meet with policy committee members and staff to discuss additional changes. The revised version was approved by the Annual Meeting. A copy of the approved priorities for this new session of Congress is available on the FCNL website at <[www.fcnl.org/about/govern/priorities/114](http://www.fcnl.org/about/govern/priorities/114)>.

Nominating Committee presented a report on the new officers and standing committees, which were approved. The names of officers and members of the Standing Committees are also available on the FCNL website.

The Finance and Development Committees made presentations on the FCNL and the FCNL Education Fund's financial status and budget. FCNL has recovered from the 2008 financial crisis and is in a strong financial position. The Business Meeting approved the Annual Budget and the Development Goals. FCNL is the lobbying arm of the organization and contributions to it are not tax-deductible. The FCNL Education Fund is the tax deductible arm. Friends who do not need the tax deduction, are urged to donate to FCNL rather than the Education Fund.

Capital Campaign. Friends approved moving forward with the next stage of the Capital Campaign. The bulk of funds raised will be used to build the endowment, primarily to ensure support for the young adult programs, and lobbying work. Funds will also make possible renovation of an adjoining property FCNL acquired from a supporter. FCNL will use the adjoining property for meeting space and for living space for the Friends in Washington program. Property on Capitol Hill is usually very expensive and very hard to get, so the opportunity to acquire this property for present and future needs is a real blessing. There is substantial progress toward the goals of the Capital Campaign already.

FCNL continues its strong commitment to young adults. This includes an eleven-month Young Fellows (paid Internships) program in Washington (application deadline of February 16); summer internships (deadline of March 1), an advocacy corps on campuses and communities, and a Spring Lobby Weekend. The special spring lobby weekend for young adults, that last year attracted 200 people, is offered this year March 14-17 and will focus on Climate Change. FCNL also offers some financial help to young adults attending the Annual Meeting. Details are on the FCNL website. The attention to young adults over many years is reflected in the involvement and enthusiastic attendance of young adults in FCNL's work.

I appreciate very much the opportunity to attend the Annual Meeting of FCNL, and hope that Friends in the New Association will continue to be active participants in its important work.

