This meeting is now being recorded.

Thank you, Theresa. Hello, friends. Welcome to our April 2020 FCNL National Advocacy Team call. We made it through March, and we are here in April. Tonight, we are with over 120 teams across 41 states, and we've been lobbying Congress for peace and justice and to end endless war, particularly in Iran, prevent a war with Iran. My name is Shoshana Abrams. As Theresa said, I am FCNL's advocacy teams manager, and it's really good to be with you tonight. Every time I have a call with our advocacy teams around the country, I just feel better after it's over. So I'm just really excited to be here with all of you.

We have a full agenda tonight. We have a wonderful guest speaker for you, FCNL's general secretary, Diane Randall. If you haven't yet been able to meet her or talk to her, this is a real treat to have her on the call. Then we'll hear from FCNL's legislative manager on Middle East policy, Hassan El-Tayyab. He'll tell us where we are on the legislation and the policies that we've been working on. I don't know if you remember way back at the beginning of March, but since we last met for a national call, we had a successful vote in the House on Senator Kaine's war powers resolution, Iran war powers resolution, so we'll be celebrating a little bit too, which feels hard sometimes but we will have that to do tonight as well. Then I'll walk us through the action sheet and we'll have some announcements to close us out.

Tonight, we have Theresa [Rugg 00:01:41] providing tech support. Everyone is muted, and if we hear feedback I'll ask Theresa to re-mute the line again. What we usually do for question and answer is for you to press *6. I'm going to ask you all if you have a question to please send me an email. My email is my first name, so S-H-O-S-H-A-N-A at FCNL.org. Again, S-H-O-S-H-A-N-A at FCNL.org. We have a lot of people on the call because you're all dialing in individually, so if you could send me an email with your questions we will try and get as many of those asked on the line tonight as possible. As I said, we do have a lot of people on the call, and we are in the future looking for other technologies that will support a higher volume of callers, but please know that we will be sending out the recording so if you have a team member who is having trouble getting on, have them rest assured that there will be a recording for them to listen to tomorrow.

I'd like to welcome our newest teams, teams that have just finished their training: St. Louis, Missouri, the San Juan islands in Washington state, Helena, Montana, and Santa Monica, California all just finished their trainings within the last week. So welcome to them. So we do a little framing as we start these calls, and friends, I have to tell you have I been up, I have been down over the past few weeks, and this often happens within the same day. But in this work with all of you, I find a lot of stability and purpose. The communicator call last Thursday night gave me hope. And the work that FCNL's young adult program has done over the past month, turning a live in-person event for 500 young people into a flawlessy executed virtual event over this past weekend left me in awe. Those young adults had 130 phone call lobby visits yesterday in one day. And you know how we figured out how to train all of them on how to lobby remotely? We figured it out by asking advocacy teams how you all do it. We are strong as passionate individuals, and we're powerful as a skills network of advocates. I'd like to hold for just a
moment or two of silence, as we center ourselves before the call tonight. So let's get started with that silence with a big inhale and exhale, and hold a bit of silence. (silence)

Shoshana:
Thank you friends. And if you've just joined us, we were just holding a moment of silence before we started. Thank you all for centering yourselves with me tonight and we'll get started with our call. So to start, I'd like to welcome and thank Diane Randall for joining us tonight. Diane, are you on the line?

Diane:
I am on the line. Can you hear me?

Shoshana:
Yes, loud and clear. Thank you. Diane, we're so happy to have you on this call tonight. For friends on the line who might not know, Diane Randall serves as FCNL's general secretary. She's a lifelong advocate for peace and justice. Diane is a fierce proponent for citizen engagement that advances policies and practices to create a better society for all. Diane believes that friends' prophetic witness to work for a world that practices peace, equality, community, integrity, and simplicity is often at odds with political life. This effort to pursue truth and seek that of god in every person we meet are disciplines that shape FCNL's patient and persistent approach to lobbying for legislation that can help a more peaceful and just world. Dianne, as you know, advocacy teams have had an incredibly successful year so far, getting multiple votes to prevent war with Iran passed in the House, and a very important passed with bipartisan support in the Senate. But 2020 ha also been a roller coaster of epic proportions. As we care for ourselves and each other, and as we dig deep, take action together, we are hoping that you can offer some words of encouragement to us as you share your perspective on this moment and on our work. We're looking forward to hearing from you, and thanks again for being on the call.

Diane:
Well thank you Shoshana for asking me to be on the call and to Theresa too for the warm welcome that she provided to everyone who joined the call. I was both delighted and amused to hear everyone joining and naming where they were coming from around the country, and to hear the breadth of participation is truly encouraging, particularly at this point in time. We are gathering this evening at a difficult moment. There's just no other way to describe the challenge that is facing us globally and significantly here in this country. And I just want to acknowledge the value of this group of people not only for what you are doing to advocate for peace and to end war, but what you are doing to build community with one another locally, and as a national operation as part of FCNL's advocacy team. It is incredibly heartening to me and to those of us on the staff at FCNL, and I hope that you find encouragement with one another in your engagement.

Diane:
I want to recognize that at this time, there are people on this call who have been affected by this pandemic because you or someone you care about might have lost a job. You or someone you care about may be working in medical services, someone people who are working in the hospitals, whether that is from services of cleaning the hospitals and providing food service, to the doctors and nurses, chaplains, technicians. The intensity of the work that they're doing now is just extraordinary, and one of the things that we do as friends, we often talk about holding people in the light. By that, I mean a kind of prayer, a kind of good intention, a kind of hope that we send to those people, including the people that
have been directly affected by this virus by testing positive for it, who are ill now, or the fact that there
may be people even who know someone who has died from it. It will touch all of us, and if it isn't the
physical touch, it's also the economic touch. So I just want to acknowledge the challenging moment in
which we gather, and because it is so challenging, the fact that we are together becomes even more
important.

Diane:
One of the things that we've been doing as an FCNL staff during the past couple of weeks as we move to
telework, we are all working remotely from our homes, and we're doing a lot of Zoom calls, a lot of time
on computer in meetings, but also our independent work. It's working out pretty well, but what's
amazing to me is to see the staff spend the time checking in with each other, asking how each person is
doing, and I hope that you might have the possibility to do that obviously in your own families, in your
Quaker meeting communities or your other faith communities if you're part of one, but also with each
other as an advocacy team locally. It's just to be able to say, "How are you?" And to listen with a kind of
intention because it is that listening and respect for each other where we see our common community.

Diane:
The work that we do for peace is about common humanity. This pandemic has taught us yet in new
ways that we are tied together inextricably, and that what we do for ourselves has an impact and
reverberation around the globe. I am really driven to work for peace because I believe that we have no
business harming each other. That is not what we do when we care about one another, when we
believe that we are all children of god. That drives me to work for peace, and I feel honored to be able
to do that from a public policy perspective, from an advocacy perspective, and I think that's part of the
reason you have joined with FCNL to do that as part of an advocacy team. For that, I want to thank you,
and I want to say to you that even in midst of this pandemic, and the attention that it is getting and it
deserves, we must continue working for peace. We must continue working to end endless war. Congress
will turn its attention to the question of war and peace, to the question of congressional authority over
determining when the US goes to war, and your voices have been instrumental in affecting the votes on
this, as Shoshana said, and they will continue to be instrumental.

Diane:
I want to just remark on Shoshana's comments about our recent spring lobby weekend. I am so proud of
the FCNL team of people who helped put that together as a virtual event, and also so proud and
encouraged by the young adults who joined us around the country. Because we were offering it
virtually, so this event is typically for young adults, primarily college and people maybe in high school,
some beyond. But because we were offering it virtually, we opened it up. I have to tell you that I heard
from a number of older friends who joined in just to listen in. They didn't necessarily lobby yesterday
with the groups that did. But they were encouraged. They were heartened to hear young people who
were advocating, and I will say to you that as we are still continuing to advocate, I talked to the foreign
policy team and the domestic policy team. They are setting up lobbying meetings with congressional
offices remotely. You all have experienced doing this. You've been doing this for a while. Many of you
connect remotely with the Washington DC offices, and some of you who live in states where the district
offices are at a distance also do remote connections. So you know that this is possible, and now we're
trying to extrapolate that in new ways, even for our lobbyists who are here in Washington.

Diane:
I want to also say that our work with the FCNL advocacy team has taught us not only the impact of grassroots lobbying and the effectiveness of it across the 40 states where we have advocacy teams, but it’s also taught us new ways to engage. It doesn't always require a face-to-face meeting, and in this difficult time when we really can't meet face-to-face, it's so important that we continue to be engaged with our members of Congress and with the media. I know that's another way that many of you have had an impacted by getting letters to the editor published, and that is an incredibly important way for us to continue to give our message to Congress that it is imperative for them to end endless war.

Diane:
There are global imperatives that we face. The pandemic is the one that we're facing right now, but climate change is a global imperative. Ending war and violent conflict is a global imperative. Human rights is another global imperative. And so I want to thank you again for your work, for your stepping forward as an individual, but stepping forward as an individual to be part of something much greater than any one person is, and that is this work that we're doing together to advocate for peace. I'm going to pause there and just open it up. I think Shoshana we have time for some questions if people would like to ask questions.

Shoshana:
Absolutely. So I haven't yet received any questions via email, but now is the time, friends, if you want to send me an email with a question or thought for Diane. It would be greatly appreciated. I will open it up to press *6 if you have a question through phone, so we can get this conversation going. If you have a question go ahead and press *6.

Diane:
Shoshana, if I might, while we're waiting for questions to come in, if I just my say that ... Oh go ahead.

Catherine:
This is Catherine Cole. I'm with the Herndon group.

Diane:
Hi Catherine. I can hear you.

Catherine:
Thank you. I am wondering about the attentiveness right now that anyone on The Hill has for topics other than getting through this current crisis. Can you speak to that?

Diane:
Yeah sure. I will remark on it, and other staff on the call may have other comments to make. But one of the things that we have heard, specifically during this past weekend with our spring lobby weekend visits, the focus issue was climate change, and we were educating the participants and our lobby visits were about asking Congress to put a price on carbon. That's not an issue that's getting talked about a lot. It's an issue that we believe is important to address climate change, but it obviously isn't in the news right now. One of the things that we heard reported back from some of the offices is that they actually were happy to talk to someone about an issue other than the coronavirus.
Now that’s not to say that their attention isn’t turned to this. It absolutely is. You know that they’ve just passed the third bill, which is the $2 trillion CARES act. They are already preparing for a fourth relief bill, and Amelia Kegan at FCNL is working on that issue. We are lobbying on that, so we are in contact with offices on that. But that doesn’t mean that they aren’t interested in hearing about other issues, and you as constituents are probably the people who can be most effective in raising the issue of endless war. They are on recess right now, and will be, we expect, for pretty much all of April, but that doesn’t mean that they aren’t working, and it doesn’t mean that their staff isn’t working, because the staffs are working from home and it is possible to be in contact with them.

I have a related question. This is Joe [Duran 00:19:06] from the Brunswick, Maine team. Our team wrote letters to both of our senators on Senate 3159 requesting the senators to co-sponsor it. We wrote those letters back on March 3rd and 4, and ordinarily we follow up, pressing them for an answer. Should we still push them for an answer to our letters? Or is it good to lay off for a while given this crisis?

That’s a great question. Shoshana, do you want to speak to that? I mean my sense is that you should expect an answer, but I’m just not sure how much you should be pressing right now given what else is going on for them.

Yeah, so my follow up question ...

Go ahead, Shoshana.

Yeah so my follow up question is was this someone ... These were people in the district office or people in the Washington DC office?

We passed the letter through the people in the district office who we knew, and one of them said that they would send it in and get back to us.

Okay, yeah, I mean I think it’s important to be patient during this time as everyone is dealing with a lot. We even find a lot of staffers are working out of their kitchen table, so it’s important to be patient, but it’s still also really important to be persistent. So definitely you can follow up in a kind way. Follow up with the office. And you could even call the DC office if you haven’t yet heard back from your contact.

Thanks.

Diane:
Nice to hear from you Joe.

Shoshana:
Diane, we have a question from Jeremy Street who I believe is from Spokane, Washington. Maybe you can speak to this a little bit and I can answer as well. Jeremy says, "With all the necessary social distancing, how can I advise people who want to start an advocacy team where there is no team present?"

Diane:
That's a great question. You should speak to that, because one of the things again we talked about how great the work we did around spring lobby weekend was. I feel it was really great, but I also know that Sarah [inaudible 00:21:26] has been doing some training with advocacy teams, and we've been reaching out. We are definitely interested in starting new advocacy teams in new places, and I think working on how we might do virtual training if that's possible. Shoshana, you probably have a more thorough answer for that.

Shoshana:
Yeah absolutely. Just so all the teams know, we actually launched the Las Vegas team through a remote workshop about two weeks ago. They are already moving into their second training, which I believe is coming up on Friday. A lot of the team, they were passionate beforehand. A lot of the team spoke to how good it is to have something to do and to dig into during this time, and how to feel powerful during this time. Are still offering workshops and starting teams coping with the situation that we're in now.

Jeff:
Hello Diane? Diane?

Diane:
Go ahead.

Jeff:
Diane, this is Jeff [Krieger 00:22:31] from Birmingham, Michigan.

Diane:
Hi Jeff.

Jeff:
Hi. You know, the political landscape has changed dramatically with the advent of coronavirus, and President Trump is out front every day co-opting space and time on his issues, but behind the scene and dangerously he is of course employing the war metaphor and all related defense acts that allow him to carry out various actions which of course support the activities that we don't want to have happen in the world. So I wonder what FCNL is going to do about that, because he's not going to speak about it.

Diane:
Right. Are you saying his use of the National Defense Act, is that the question?
Jeff:
Of course. Yeah. He's not just used for getting masks.

Diane:
Yeah.

Jeff:
For corona.

Diane:
Yeah. I think ... We had some conversation about this together today internally, and I think we are still looking at what's possible to do. It is difficult right now to lobby against any activity that is actually trying to address the pandemic, given the escalating death rate and infection rate. That said, the militaristic approach and the notion that this is actually a war just doesn't stick. We don't agree with that. Some of this is about how we might counter this in messaging, and this may be something that the advocacy teams can think about as you do work on letter writing is think about what are the messages that you can give that talk about the importance of linking coronavirus to what we have to do to work for peace. I mean I know that many of you on this call have already re-thought how do we define national security? And clearly, we I think are in agreement that our definition of national security, of being at war, or investing more in war through a larger and larger Pentagon budget, is not bringing us national security, and in fact this pandemic points that out.

Diane:
The opportunity, again, at a very mega level exists to try to change that narrative, to try to change the conversation about how do we address these global threats that face us as a world, and what might we do? I think asking our elected officials to think out on what might be done differently than just invoking war metaphors to being sort of optimistic about a resolution to this is not truly effective public policy. That's what I ... I mean I think the question of sort of like how do we look at coming out of this pandemic and re-assessing our priorities, there will be opportunities to do that. The voices coming from people around the country will be very important.

Jeff:
Thank you.

Shoshana:
Thank you. Thank you. I have two questions that I want to ask Diane if you have time for two more.

Diane:
Absolutely.

Shoshana:
Wonderful. Okay so this one is Robert Levering in Santa Cruz, California. The National Commission on Military and National Service has just made its report, and it has a recommendation that Congress requires women to register for the draft. Are FCNL lobbyists going to work on this? If so, who is going to work on it?
Diane:
So thanks for the question, Robert. This is one that you and I talked a little bit about. We have testified against not just the idea of women having to register, but against that men have to register. FCNL historically has opposed universal conscription. It is really a kind of fundamental practice of friends, of Quakers, that people should not be coerced to have to join military service or any other kind of mandatory governmental service. Right now, what we've done is we have signed onto support the legislation that Representative DeFazio has put forward to try to eliminate the Selective Service system. We do not have an individual on staff right now who is working on that, and I don't see that we will have someone directly lobbying on The Hill. We are looking at how we can educate and provide information to friends around the country, Christine Ashley, our Quaker Field Secretary, has been in contact with folks, and Alex, who is our communications associate has been also helping develop some materials so we do now have a webpage. That's what we're doing right now, but we are watching this. It is one of those issues that will probably not make much traction in terms of the particular bill that Representative DeFazio is doing. It's not going to have a lot of traction in 2020, and so we will be watching to see what might happen in 2021.

Shoshana:
Thank you Dianne, and great question Robert. Okay so the last question that I have for you is from Casey Wilson on the eastern panhandle West Virginia team. He says, "Can you comment on the role that advocacy teams can play on the discernment process at meetings?" I guess he's talking about the priorities as well.

Diane:
Well if that's about the discernment process for priorities, we would love to have people on advocacy teams participate. One of the things we've done because of the difficulty, many ... Quaker meetings have done really an amazing job of moving to Zoom to hold waiting worship on Sunday morning and at other times of the week. If you are a friend or if you are not a Quaker but you would like to participate in that, there are a lot of opportunities to just sit in front of your computer and have a period silence. Let me just say to you, I did it this afternoon with FCNL's silent reflection, which happens every Wednesday afternoon. There's something actually quite deep about sitting with other friends in silence, even in your own home. Welcome you to do that, just as a practice. That might be a good form of self care.

Diane:
In terms of the priorities process, again Christine Ashley, our Quaker Field Secretary, is happy to provide support to meetings who might be willing to do that discernment of the priorities process through a virtual meeting, through Zoom meeting. This discernment of priorities is the way that FCNL really decides which are the legislative issues that are going to have the most priority for us in the next Congress. We are in a time period where we're asking Quaker meetings, worship groups, gatherings, to help us discern what those priorities should be, and then to submit them online. There's a space on the FCNL website to submit them.

Diane:
The next step is our policy committee, which is one of FCNL's governing committees, looks at all the responses that comes in, and then they do some discernment to determine where there is weight. Now these sometimes change. Sometimes they remain relatively stable every two years, because that's the frequency with which we do it. I can pretty much tell you we're always going to be working for peace in
some way, but sometimes they vary, and sometimes the variance depends on what's happening in the world. We have for example in the last couple of years while FCNL has always had a position for the prevention of gun violence, that's been an issue that's become a more prominent issue for us in the last couple of years.

Diane:
It is incredibly valuable for people to actually take a look at what those priorities might be to have the discussions. It's another way to build community within your Quaker meeting or within your group, and so we are hopeful that you might still submit priorities by May ... I should know this. It's either the first or the third, but early May is when we would like to have the priorities back.

Shoshana:
Great. Thank you, Diane. Thank you also for explaining the process of what priorities are and also going into some steps about Quaker practice. Not all of our teams on the line are Quaker, but it's good to know where FCNL finds itself in the world and to understand that process, so thank you for explaining that. Diane, do you have any last thoughts for our network before we let you off the line?

Diane:
Thanks Shoshana. I would just say that again I hope that you are finding community with one another as a way to give you a grounding during this time, because we find it with you. We find it with one another as a staff but we also find that kind of sense of community as important in this time that is so challenging for all of us, and that will be challenging not just this month but in the months ahead. I want to thank you for that and I want to just again repeat the word that Shoshana used in response to Joe's question about getting a response from the offices in Maine was to exercise some patience. We may have to be a little bit more patient right now, and that goes to Catherine's question too, that the response time on the issues we're working on may not come as quickly as we'd like, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't be persistent and we shouldn't be asking these questions because they are not just questions but advocating to end war because it's an essential advocacy position to have, and one that our elected officials need to hear. They need to hear it from the people who can vote for them. Thank you. Thank you for doing that, and for staying with us, and being persistent and encouraging us, and we hope we can encourage and support you in this work.

Shoshana:
Thank you so much, Diane. Thanks for being with us. You're free to stay on.

Diane:
Absolutely. I will probably stay on. I'd like to listen to what Hassan has to say.

Shoshana:
Wonderful. Also I want to thank you all for sending in email questions. I have quite a few. I'm saving some of them for Hassan's portion of the call, but as you continue to have questions come up, feel free to email me. Those that we don't get to on the call I can respond via email tomorrow. I just want to let you know about the amount of lobbying that you've done this year. We have 74 recorded lobby visits per advocacy team so far this year, and 39 media pieces published. Before all of this happened with COVID, we had nine outreach events that already happened this year. That's just incredible work. You can continue to report back to us, and in fact I insist that you continue to report back to us about the
work your team is doing, and that's easily found on the FCNL.org/team toolkit website. It's right there at the top, the lobby report back form, the media report back form, the outreach event report, and also if you have new members joining your team, you can have them be added to the list serve on the new member report. Take a look at that, re-familiarize yourself with the team toolkit if you haven't been there in a while. You can also see the action sheet is on there as well as updates on what our teams are doing.

Shoshana:

There was some discussion on the communicator list serve, and Nancy Berman sent us a draft of a letter to the editor that she submitted, and it was really beautiful and I think it tied together a lot of issues that we are working on. I've asked Nancy to read it if she's on the line. Nancy, if you're on the line, will you go ahead and press *6?

Nancy:

[inaudible 00:35:46]

Shoshana:

Yes, we can hear you.

Nancy:

Okay. Well, I especially loved hearing Diane talk because I think as you said our discussion has really tied into what I submitted and of course will to be published in the New York Times this week. Here's my letter. Can you still hear me? Because I moved into another room.

Shoshana:

Yes, we can hear you.

Nancy:

Okay thank you. I title it War is Bad for Our Health. As we are seeing with our nation's delayed, uncoordinated, and inadequate response to the COVID pandemic, the 2020 $738 billion defense budget all but precludes investment in research, strategies, and programs to improve health outcomes. Despite our immediate overwhelming need for ventilators, hospital beds, and healthcare professionals, masks, gloves, gowns, and cleaning supplies, medications, testing, and vaccines, safe housing and nutrition, easy, free access to healthcare for all, including mental health ... Instead of redeploying military personnel, supplies, and dollars, our president continues to push for an increased military budget and continues to march toward war with Iran, all while people are dying, anxiety is epidemic, food and toilet paper are scarce, and suffering in all spheres of their individual and collective lives grows exponentially along with the virus.

Nancy:

In addition to redeploying military resources now to combat the COVID pandemic, Congress must use its power of the purse to reprioritize our federal budget and appropriate more of our tax dollars towards [inaudible 00:37:51] our health and our safety net. Another tool Congress must use to reconfigure our priorities is reclaiming its constitutional authority over war decisions. Both houses have current and upcoming votes on war powers legislation, as well as legislation to withhold funding for unconstitutional
war with Iran, and repeal outdated 2001 and 2002 Authorizations for Use of Military Force. Our hope lies in Congress tilting our priorities towards a peace-based economy. Only then will we have a moral budget, one that focuses our resources on wellness rather than promoting suffering, preventable illness, and death. Thank you.

Shoshana:
Thank you so much, Nancy. This really says it all. So many different angles that you can pull into advocacy on these issues that we’ve been working on, tying in the current moment. I found a lot of inspiration in reading this letter to the editor, so I hope it does get published, but if not, it has had wide amplification through our network, and I hope it inspires some of you to write things similarly aligned.

Shoshana:
I just want to turn your attention for just a moment to the action sheet before we hand things off to Hassan. On the action sheet, there are several options this month, and I hope you can find something that meets the needs of your team and also help you feel power to take action in this moment. We are continuing to build, and you’ll hear more about this from Hassan, we’re continuing to build cosponsors on the No War Against Iran Act. We are still hoping that that language will be added to the National Defense Authorization Act when it comes up, likely this summer. We also want you to advocate for an easement of sanctions on Iran as they cope with the effects of COVID-19, and there’s been an increased tension there that Hassan will speak about. And then I want you to also think about focusing on letters to the editor in this moment. It’s a great way to amplify your voice. You get published in the media and you let your community and your members of Congress know that their tax dollars should be spent on healing our country, not destroying others, exactly as Nancy’s letter to the editor said. That's what we have on the action sheet. I hope it helps you track your actions as you meet with your teams in the coming days.

Shoshana:
I am going to pass things off now to Hassan to give us a briefing on the issue we've been working on, No War With Iran. Hassan, are you on the line?

Hassan:
I am. Can you hear me?

Shoshana:
Yes. Go right ahead.

Hassan:
Great, great. Okay, well thank you all so much for being here and sharing this time with us. We haven’t gotten to celebrate the House passage of S.J. Res. 68. I know we probably can't all celebrate, or I can't hear you celebrate, but go, "Woo, yeah." I'm very excited about this. This was the second time in US history that a war powers resolution is heading to the president's desk, and that was passed with a bipartisan vote, 227 to 186, and the bill directs the president to terminate the use of military ... Preemptively terminates the use of military force against Iran. I think that's really important, and it couldn't have happened without so much amazing activism that's been going on in the FCNL network and with our whole coalition. Everybody should I think be really happy about that and by signaling that the US doesn't want to take sudden unauthorized military action against Iran, I believe the bill lowers
the temperature in the Middle East, and reduces the likelihood of preemptive military action. So anyway, just very excited about that.

Hassan:
It came just in time. We know that the Trump administration has been increasing the risk and threat in the Middle East for some time. Just today, Trump did a tweet. He said, "Upon information and belief, Iran or its proxies are planning a sneak attack on the US." He said that Iran will pay a heavy price indeed. Now is the perfect time to urge our members to reassert congressional war authority and support this legislation in the No War Against Iran Act, and try to get good language in the NDAA. In my experience, some folks touched upon this earlier, but some congressional staff are overwhelmed with constituent work around COVID-19, but I find a lot of staff actually has time in their hands. I think I really do think that this is a great time for people to gently be checking in with their members, and just making sure that they're on the bills we want them on and that they're staying engaged on foreign policy.

Hassan:
I want to just turn briefly to NDAA. Now, no one really knows exactly when the NDAA will happen. Some folks are thinking at some point this summer, and I believe that there's been at least a 30-day extension, and it's probably going to be beyond that, but we had the original date of a markup, April 30th, but again that's being pushed further and further back, and that said, folks are still working on the language and again it's a great time to reach out. So keep asking your members about the No War With Iran Act language.

Hassan:
I forgot to mention also that we have not gotten a veto ... the S.J. Res. 68 Iran War Powers Resolution hasn't been vetoed yet. The House actually hasn't even sent it over to the president. The reason is that they want to wait for both chambers to be back. We'll keep everybody updated on when that actually goes to the president's desk and comes back.

Hassan:
I wanted to talk about Iran sanctions as well, because as the crisis in the US is ramping up, Iran and its healthcare system have been totally overwhelmed for months by this virus. Iran was one of the first and hardest hit nations with over 27,000 reported cases of COVID-19, and 2,000 deaths. The number just increases. What makes this crisis unique with Iran is that while they're trying to deal with this pandemic, they're also facing crushing economic sanctions imposed by the US, really hurting Iran's ability to contain the spread of COVID-19. So as US citizens, I think we can play a big role in pushing back on the administration and trying to support sanctions relief on Iran. I think it's very critical right now. So yeah, I think if folks can, talk to your member and see if they're interested in Iran sanctions relief, and how far would they like to see it go? That would be really good intel. I'm currently working on The Hill with some of our colleagues in the coalition on another letter effort. AOC and Bernie did a Iran sanctions relief letter, but we're hoping to get one that goes beyond the 20 or so members that we got on that last letter, so really any help that our FCNL community could do on that front would be wonderful. Now, I just want to turn things over to Shoshana, and I look forward to your questions.

Shoshana:
Great. Thank you, Hassan. I have a question here. If you have a question, we'll take one from the live call, and then I will read some questions from the emails. You can press *6 to ask your question.
Dave:
Hi, this is Dave from Madison.

Shoshana:
Go ahead, Dave.

Dave:
Yeah, thank you. Hassan, you were just talking about the letter or letters that have been put to the administration to try to lift the sanctions at this time. I just read in the New York Times that 33 senators and reps sent a letter over on Tuesday. When you say getting a hold of our reps and senators to ask them to support future letters, is there a way we can know which of them have signed onto prior letters? Or how we can thank them and/or press them further? That's it. Thank you.

Hassan:
Yeah, great question. Maybe the follow up email we can share the AOC Bernie letter that was circulated around that you were just referring to, and give everybody a list of the members that signed onto that letter. There hasn't been a new letter yet, and we'll definitely keep people updated as things develop. I just feel like if we narrow the scope just a little bit, we can get a broader coalition of members to sign up. We definitely will let people know about the list if and when that happens.

Shoshana:
Great. So as Hassan and I were talking in preparation for this call, we were talking about what teams can do on this. Hassan is really looking for intel from you all as you talk to your members of Congress. If you can find members of Congress to be interested in doing a sign-on letter, who are maybe not on board with the AOC Bernie letter, or maybe they were, please let us know and send us that lobby report so that he can follow up with those offices and get more offices on board. I also am trying to check myself with my acronyms, so AOC is Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and NDAA rolls of the tongue when you know it, but it's the National Defense Authorization Act. That is one of the methods that we use to bring bills forward because it is what's considered a must-pass piece of legislation.

Shoshana:
Hassan, I have a question here from Ingrid in Berkeley. You talked about this a little bit, but I think it's worth hearing your perspective as a coalition partner. Ingrid says, "I've heard that Trump is not only continuing sanctions on Iran during this time of this pandemic, but is also working to promote military actions in Iran, even at this time. Does FCNL have specific advice on how to oppose this? I've gotten several emails from Win Without War about this, and can follow through on these, but I sometimes prefer FCNL's framing on this issue."

Hassan:
Yes. Great question. We do. I think right now is the perfect time to continue pressing for the No War Against Iran Act, and really building out as much support for that, getting your members to put out statements or tweets in support of that, and hopefully we can get some good language in the NDAA that takes unauthorized war with Iran completely off the table. We do have an action tab on our website, if you click Iran in that link, and there is a generated email that can go right to your member. That has the FCNL framing, so I would definitely urge, and maybe we can share a link to that, and to the legislative
ask to the No War Against Iran act with folks, which has the talking points. People should definitely be encouraged to email and call their members.

Shoshana:
Absolutely, and if you’re doing one of those action alerts online, please be sure to customize, customize, customize your language. The more that you make it your own, the more power it will have with offices. We can link with that action alert as well.

Hassan:
Great point. Obviously get your friends and neighbors to call too. Text all your friends.

Shoshana:
Tell all your friends about it. Okay. We have time for a couple more questions, and I'm not seeing any others in my inbox, so if you want to press *6 to ask a question, please do so.

Nancy:
Hi it's Nancy in [Oberlin 00:51:03].

Shoshana:
I heard Nancy first, in Oberlin perhaps?

Nancy:
Okay. Thanks we actually have a phone call tomorrow morning with Senator Rob Portman's senior staff in northern Ohio, and I just wondered if there's any point, just really specific, exact thing we should say to our Republican senator?

Hassan:
That's a great question. Definitely urge your senator to support the No War Against Iran Act. I think the framing of unconstitutional war might be the best framing for that particular member. Getting into it about how good or bad Iran is, that's kind of a losing argument with that senator, but keeping it focused on Article I war powers, and to just say that if we're going to use military force, it has to come through Congress. The American people, through their elected representatives, need a say in war decisions. I think that would be the approach I'd take there.

Shoshana:
Thank you. I have a question from Jim Carpenter in Milwaukee. Jim says, "Attaching anti-war amendments to NDAA, the National Defense Authorization Act, did not work last time," I think meaning last year when we were working on 2002 AUMF repeal. "Why do we think it will work if we try it again with a new NDAA?"

Hassan:
That's a great question, and unfortunately the power dynamics here are so that Trump has the White House, and the Senate is controlled by the Republicans, and regardless, we just don't have the votes to get through, do a veto override, and we have to make a deal between Democrats and Republicans on this language. Yes, we did get defeated last year. That said, keeping the drumbeat going of pressure
against the Trump administration for launching unauthorized war is really important, so continuing to force these votes, generate headlines, I think that shows that Congress and the American people don't want this, even if we don't get it into the final NDAA. It also sets us up for other votes in the future, and if there is a new administration, so that's also really important, kind of setting the tone for the future. I wish there was a better answer, but I think it's really critical right now more than ever that people continue making their voice heard, and keeping the drumbeat going to say that the American people really don't want a war on Iran. I think that will impact the calculus of Iran and the Trump administration.

Shoshana:
Thank you. I also just want to add a framing that I've been thinking about with all of our work over the past years that I've been working with advocacy teams is how far we've come and the trajectory where we're going. A lot of the votes that I'm seeing now, and this is just from me, Shoshana, as a not lobbyist, a lot of the votes that I'm seeing now are about getting Democrats on the record for Congress taking back its authority. That way, when there is eventually a Democrat administration, we get these votes through, and this is a priority for them. We're thinking in the long game at FCNL, and getting these folks on the record time and time again make it harder and harder for members of Congress to take a different stance in a different scenario with a different president.

Alex:
This is Alex from Houston. I've got a question.

Shoshana:
Sure, go ahead Alex. Last one.

Alex:
Yeah. I met with a member of Congress's staff, and I mentioned to him that it was unconstitutional by delegating the power to go to war, and he replied to me that it's not unconstitutional because a law was passed. My question is is that correct? We know it's not the intent of the framers of the Constitution to have the president make that decision, but is it unconstitutional to have this law, these AUMFs passed? Thank you.

Hassan:
Yeah, so that's a great question. There's a lot of confusion around this. The 2002 Iraq AUMF was the authorization used to strike Soleimani. I believe I'm assuming that's what the conversation was about, whether or not that was legally allowed. That authorization we kind of have continued to make the point is that was passed to go after Saddam Hussein in 2002. It was used to remove Saddam Hussein from power. The idea that that could potentially be used for a strike on an Iranian government official just isn't supported by the law. Our argument is that Congress needs to be authorizing any future hostilities, and I think we should well within our rights to just continue that talking point, and to say that if the administration wants to pursue further military action, they just need to get an authorization for use of military force. Obviously we should always be saying, "And we don't want war with Iran, plain and simple."

Shoshana:
Thank you. Thank you for all those great questions. Thank you, Hassan, for fielding them all. You should all know that Hassan is available too as a resource if you have questions in preparation for a lobby visit or questions about the framing of something. Hassan can help you. He also has a great program assistant named Ethan who can help.

Shoshana:

Just a couple notes before we close out. I know many of you have meetings coming up right after this with your team through Zoom. A couple notes, if you weren't able to listen to the communicator call last Thursday night, I highly highly recommend it. Sarah [Friedman Walbert 00:57:56], one of our amazing advocacy team trainers, spoke about how to keep our teams going strong during this time of social distancing, or rather as she called it physical distancing, not social distancing. She talked about how to care for each other, and she also provided many ideas on how to take action together remotely. There's a lot of rich content shared on those calls. If you don't have someone regularly calling into the communicator call, let us know and we can figure out how to support you.

Shoshana:

In that vein, we are doing some research to try and figure out how to use the communicator call resource. So [inaudible 00:58:33] who is one of our other advocacy team trainers has put together a survey for communicators. If you have not yet taken that survey, and you are a communicator, I'll send that out tomorrow so you can do so. The next communicator call on the ninth, I will not be on the call. It is Passover. But we're going to do things a little bit differently and we're going to test out some new technology videoconferencing with Zoom, and we'll be leaving a little bit more space to hear from teams and let them talk to one another, learn how they're planning to take action, and hopefully have a wonderful time getting to know each other as well.

Shoshana:

The dates for the next call, the next national call, will be on May 5th, and the April communicator calls are on the 9th and the 23rd. I just want to highlight again the action sheet that can help you guide your actions this month. We want to urge our senators and our representatives to co-sponsor the No War Against Iran Act, in the hope that it becomes part of an amendment to the NDAA. We want to advocate for an easement of sanctions on Iran as they cope with the effects of COVID-19, and we'd really love to see more letters to the editor published that amplifies our voice on these issues. I know many of you have organized calls with Zoom meetings directly after this, and others have meetings scheduled in the coming days. I want you to know how much it warms my heart for all of us to be banding together during these hard times. As I said at the beginning, we are strong when we care for one another, and we're powerful when we take action together. I'm going to have Theresa unmute all the lines in just a moment, and I hope we can all wish each other a good night.

Theresa:

Okay here we go everyone, good evening, nice evening. [crosstalk 01:00:29]