A Quaker Approach to Lobbying

Even as FCNL has grown and taken on more legislative priorities, it has maintained a distinctly Quaker approach to lobbying. FCNL’s governance continues to reflect the principles of Quaker beliefs and processes, and seeks to answer to the Light in everyone. Friends’ eagerness to work collaboratively across political and religious lines has allowed our influence to exceed our numbers.

By supporting FCNL—the lobbying organization—through the capital campaign, supporters will provide the financial foundation to boost our lobbying and signal to others that our vision is backed by commitment and faith. FCNL’s approach to lobbying—grassroots, strategic and informed by Quaker values—provides Friends with a significant voice in Washington. Together, we can ensure that FCNL will stand as a witness for peace for generations to come.

Quick Facts

- 96,795 messages sent to Congress through FCNL’s website in 2013
- 70 lobby visits by FCNL supporters completed in 2013
- 531 lobby visits by FCNL staff completed in 2013

Campaign Goal

Sustaining our Lobbying
Endowment: $2 million
Program: $1 million

“We are a people that follow after those things that make for peace, love and unity; it is our desire that others’ feet may walk in the same, and do deny and bear our testimony against all strife and wars and contentions... Our weapons are not carnal, but spiritual.”
Margaret Fell, 1660
Now Is the Time

The term “lobbying” isn’t always associated with Quakers. But for 70 years, the Friends Committee on National Legislation has filled a vital role in Washington, DC. As the first ecumenical faith-based lobby, today FCNL fields the largest team of peace lobbyists—working on the Hill—with Congress, the Administration and colleague organizations to advance specific policy initiatives that build a more peaceful and just world.

This crucial niche in Washington is carried out by registered lobbyists who visit Congressional offices, communicate with Congressional staff, track legislation carefully, organize for change with coalition partners and engage grassroots constituents from across the country to advocate for legislation.

In order to conduct our lobbying, FCNL has an IRS status that means donations are not tax-deductible. Because much of our work also involves research and education, we have a companion organization—the FCNL Education Fund—with an IRS status that makes all gifts tax deductible.

Thankfully, many people have contributed to FCNL even though they don’t receive a tax deduction. Our goal in this capital campaign for FCNL lobbying is to raise new program money to boost the vital grassroots engagement to influence members of Congress and to build an endowment that will sustain our lobbying for long into the future. The capital campaign is also an opportunity to educate our donors that they can have a significant impact on our work by designating FCNL as a recipient in their wills. Recent changes in the federal and most state tax codes mean that very few estates are subject to tax, so bequests to FCNL’s lobbying are a good choice for the majority of donors.

Expanding FCNL's Grassroots Lobbying

We know that in-person constituent visits are the most effective way to influence members of Congress. We believe that policymakers often agree with FCNL’s position but feel politically constrained because they aren’t aware of constituent support. Meetings with constituents from a representative’s district are a powerful complement to visits from expert lobbyists in Washington and can help encourage legislators to take positions that might otherwise seem politically untenable.

FCNL’s role is to empower the activists in our informed and engaged network to reach out to their representatives when it matters the most. FCNL’s staff closely follows legislative developments and mobilizes supporters in the districts of key representatives. The capital campaign will provide resources to expand FCNL’s network to thousands of citizen-lobbyists representing every Congressional district in the country.

As part of our strategy, FCNL hosted a Spring Lobby Weekend in 2014 that drew over 175 young adults to Washington DC to make the case of why the AUMF should be repealed. This lobby weekend came in the midst of FCNL staff visits to over 70 Congressional offices. Over many months, at FCNL’s encouragement, members of our network have made more than 90 visits to either the DC or local offices of their representatives, and made thousands of calls and emails to advocate on this issue.

The results: In 2013 when this issue came for a vote, 185 representatives voted for repeal and in May of 2014 that total increased to 191 voting for repeal, including significant representation of both parties. This capital campaign will ensure that FCNL has the capacity to build on our vigorous and effective lobbying to end endless war as well as the other priorities that matter to all of us.

FCNL can be highly effective in pursuing peace by strategically empowering Friends across the country to build relationships with their members of Congress. Greater financial resources will allow FCNL to expand our field operations in order to assist activists in building their relationships with members of Congress and with FCNL.

"What does it mean to work from inspired faith in a time of conflict? It means recognizing that our work is walking into the conflict and staying clear about our call. It means that to realize the world we seek, we must be bold, strategic and relentless."

Diane Randall, Executive Secretary

Case Study

Lobbying for Peace: Ending the Endless War

FCNL’s strategy to address “endless war” is focused on lobbying for the repeal of the Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF). Passed almost immediately following September 11, 2001, the AUMF gave the president wide and undefined power to use, “all necessary and appropriate force” to retaliate against the perpetrators to the 9/11 attacks. This very brief but broadly stated law gave President Bush and now President Obama’s legal justification for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the continued operation of Guantanamo Bay, the use of lethal drones by the US government and the expansion of spying by the National Security Agency.

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Tom Ewell, General Committee Member

“I never imagined that I would have a member of Congress in my living room eating my apple pie cut into the divisions of federal budget spending categories. I never imagined that I could influence federal policy, but I have learned that I can have an influence. Through FCNL, I am making my voice heard. I am so excited to help even more people become grassroots lobbyists through FCNL.”

Diane Randall, Executive Secretary

(continued)
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