Prophetic, Persistent, Powerful: FCNL Visiting Friend Presentation Outline (Jan 2019)

This is meant to be a guide for your presentations, but do not feel obligated to use it exactly—Each FCNL Visiting Friends presentation is unique. Your story is to be front and center!

1. Begin by introducing yourself, thanking the meeting, etc.

2. Tell your story, what was your personal spiritual path to pursuing social justice, and how has FCNL fit into this?

Show of hands (choose one or two)
* Can someone tell me what lobbying means?
* How many of you know what FCNL is?
* How many have sent an email to lobby your elected representative?
* How many of you have met with a member of Congress or their staff?

Often Friends know the acronym but don’t really know what FCNL does. Talking points:

- Oldest registered religious lobby in Washington.
- Governed by members of the Religious Society of Friends – through a General Committee that includes individual Quakers appointed by 26 Yearly Meetings and Quaker Organizations
- Our Priorities and Policies are set by Friends, beginning with discernment at monthly meetings across the country. In January through April every 2 years, Friends from across the country are engaging in the process. This grounding among Friends is so important to FCNL’s vision: FCNL isn’t just staff in Washington establishing an agenda and moving forward. We’re a community around the country that includes individuals in every Congressional district in the country that is focused and powerful. Members of Congress know that we have constituents in their district who are opinion leaders.

FCNL is:

Prophetic – FCNL has a wide vision of the world we seek: “A world free of war and the threat of war, a society with equity and justice for all, a community where every person’s potential may be fulfilled, and an earth restored”

Persistent – We take the long view. The way that our community lobbies is grounded in Friend’s faith and practice. We start with the belief that the Light of God exists in everyone. We are carefully nonpartisan, we seek to build relationships with members of Congress across the political spectrum and we focus on identifying ways in which we can work with others to move policy forward.

Powerful – In the last 20 years, FCNL has played a major role in blocking three proposals to build new nuclear bombs, has helped establish two state department programs focused on preventing conflict, and has helped stop Congress from undermining US diplomacy with Iran. We helped push progress on important legislation
last December in 2018. We protected the funding and the Food Stamp Program; we helped pass Savannah’s Act in the House, we mobilized Friends to bring about a first step in criminal justice reform through the passage of the First Step Act. Most recently we saw the fruits of years of efforts in the passage of the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act.

Friends have created an amazing community that links work in Washington to a broad grassroots network of people around the country. FCNL also fields the largest number of registered lobbyists for Peace in Washington, and we are growing thanks to your support!

Friends often don’t know how powerful FCNL is. Quakers working with FCNL helped to establish the Peace Corps, were thanked by several dozen members of Congress for their work on the civil rights act, and of course have played important roles in working to prevent war and creating structures within government to prevent future violent conflict. You may have heard about “First Step Act”, the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act, the “Gibson Climate Resolution,” and the the “Bipartisan Climate Solutions Caucus” which were big wins on the Hill for all of us. We keep moving.

This FCNL community helped build the First Green Building on Capitol Hill, which serves as a witness for energy efficiency and action on climate change and has been a model for those trying to green Congress. AND we now have opened the Quaker Welcome Center where we hold Witness Wednesday events which include weekly lobby trainings and silent reflection in the evenings. Read more at fcnl.org/qwc

There are many ways to work with FCNL:

We need your lobbying. The first step is to sign up for our email list. On the attendance sheet circulating (or online at fcnl.org/VFsignin) you can check if you would like to receive updates from DC. You can receive as little as about five emails a month or as much as 15 or 20. But I guarantee they will be short, focused and set up in a way that you can help change Washington. Become a letter writing coordinator: write letters to your members of Congress once a month with other people from your Meeting. This helps FCNL build relationships with Members of Congress.

Grasstips, help us identify local people who might already know members of Congress. We rarely find a Quaker meeting where someone isn’t less than two degrees of separation from a member of Congress. Who in your community already knows your members of Congress, knows someone who knows them or could make contact with a member of Congress because of their position in the community.

General Committee, we need your participation in our governance. Your participation in our governance, priorities, and policy setting is what grounds us among Friends. This process begins every 2 years in January and is submitted by April when it next moves to FCNL’s Policy Committee for Discernment.

You don’t have to act every week. You might only be able to act once or twice a year. There are many ways and different levels of involvement to engage with FCNL.

Lastly, I’m a financial supporter of FCNL, and I do it because I see the success that FCNL has and know that my contribution goes directly towards supporting lobbyists walking the halls of Congress working towards peace and justice. FCNL finished its capital campaign called “The World We Seek: Now is the Time” and celebrated 75 years on the Hill. They created an endowment for the Young Adult Program, grew our presence with the new Quaker Welcome Center and the Friend in Washington Program. We are not only sustaining our lobbying in DC but we are growing an FCNL movement through the 97 Advocacy Teams and 20 Advocacy
Corps members across the nation. I hope you will consider your own financial support or, if you are a financial supporter already, consider increasing your support as another way to further the mission of FCNL. If you’re at a moment in your life when you need a tax deduction, you can instead make a contribution to the FCNL Education Fund—both further the work that Friends have asked our community to do.

Conclusion

Ask for questions/open it up for discussion!