

Shoshana Abrams:

Hello, everyone, welcome to our June 2021 FCNL National Advocacy teams call. Tonight we are gathered with over 125 teams, across 44 states plus the District of Columbia. And we're out campaigning and lobbying to end endless war and repeal authorizations for use of military force this year. My name is Shoshana Abrams, I'm FCNL's Advocacy teams manager, and it's just really good to see all your faces and be on this call with you all tonight.

Shoshana Abrams:

We're going to jump right into things, because we have a very full agenda, so let me tell you about what we have in store. We have a wonderful guest speaker for you all, the Reverend Dr. Liz Theoharis of the Poor People's Campaign and the Kairos Center. I know folks are really excited to hear from her. And we will have time for question and answer after her presentation. And then I'm going to share a little bit of an update on the lobbying you are all doing around the country, and they'll be a chance for you to share a story or two from around the country, you can hear what the other teams are doing.

Shoshana Abrams:

And then we're going to go into a policy update from Julia Gledhill, our lobbyists and programme assistant on militarism and human rights, and there'll be time for question and answer with Julia, and with Jim Cason, FCNL's director of strategic advocacy, I forgot your title. And then I'm going to briefly introduce our interim lobbyist, who is helping out Julia, Elizabeth [inaudible 00:01:41], who might know from previous work in FCNL. And then we have some announcements to close this out, so I hope we can do it all in our hour together, I think it'll be a lot of fun.

Shoshana Abrams:

We have Sarah Freeman-Woolpert providing tech support tonight, if you need anything, you can send her a private message, and she'll try and help you out. She'll also be trying to keep our lines nice and clear and muted, so that we have a good recording for all our friends who couldn't join us tonight. The live captioning is available, and you should be able to click a button on your screen, to either see it or not see it as you will. It is auto generated, so there will be mistakes, they never seem to get the phrase AUMF correct, so take that for what it's worth, I'm not typing as I'm speaking.

Shoshana Abrams:

As we get to the question and answer part of the call, please feel free to put your questions in the chat, or to use the raise hand function on Zoom to ask your questions. Alright, those are all my announcements. So, to set the tone for the call and our wonderful guest speaker, I wanted to give a quote from Martin Luther King Jr, to set the tone, is there really any other way to start this conversation?

Shoshana Abrams:

So Martin Luther King Jr. said, "The triple evils of poverty, racism, and militarism, are forms of violence that exist in a vicious cycle. They are interrelated, all inclusive, and stand as barriers for our living in the beloved community. When we work to remedy one evil, we affect all evils." So that's the quote I want you to hold as we move through this presentation on this topic tonight, and as we do this work together. I'd like to welcome and thank the Reverend Dr. Liz Theoharis for joining us tonight. Liz, I see that you're on, so I'm going to go ahead and introduce you to the folks you're speaking with.

Shoshana Abrams:

We are so happy and grateful to have you on the call tonight. We currently as you heard me say, have 125 teams around the country, who are in 44 states plus D.C., all of them are really dedicated to seeing a more peaceful and just world, and they're building relationships with their members of Congress to advance that. And they're building relationships across political divides as well. Over the last five and a half or nearly six years of the program, our advocates have been lobbying relentlessly to end endless war, and specifically this year we are focused on repealing the authorizations for use of military force.

Shoshana Abrams:

Friends, if you don't know the Reverend Dr. Liz Theoharis, she is the co-chair of the Poor People's Campaign, with Reverend Dr. William Barber. They do so many things, mobilizing people, building community to change the world, and they have a lot of different priorities and things that they're trying to accomplish, so I'm not going to try and sum them up today, I'll send some links in the follow up email if you don't know about them.

Shoshana Abrams:

Liz received her BA in Urban Studies from the University of Pennsylvania, her Master's in Divinity from the Union Theological Seminary, and her PhD from Union Theological Seminary in New Testament and Christian origins. She's been published in New York Times, Time Magazine, CNN, The Guardian, Sojourners, The Nation and others. In 2018, she gave the Building A Moral Movement TED Talk, and was named Politico's 50: thinkers, doers and visionaries whose ideas are driving politics. I love that combination of words.

Shoshana Abrams:

So Liz, I first want to thank you just for all you do in this movement to change the world. And in preparation for this, getting myself all psyched up, I watched the event that The Poor People's Campaign hosted on May 24th, about the third reconstruction, and it was just such a powerful movement, your words move me and I'm just really grateful to have you on this call. One of the things that I loved watching it, is the incredibly intersectional approach that you all bring to this work, both in the coalition's that you're building, but also in the different issues that you touch on.

Shoshana Abrams:

So I'm hoping tonight that you can talk for just about seven minutes, on how you think militarism, and particularly ending endless war is related to issues of economic justice and economic equity. So the question is, as our teams are advocating for ending endless war and ending militarism, how can they bring this lens of economic justice to the issue? So, thanks again for being with us, and take it away.

Liz Theoharis:

Thank you so much, it's really good to be here. I was raised in a family that was deeply dedicated to doing social justice organizing and peace work. I remember having to go to a Quaker meeting, the first Sunday after the first Gulf War broke out, because there was nowhere else to be in community, in worship with people. Not the church I was raised in, not the interfaith organizing community, but we went indeed too. And the friends and the organizing that people have done from the founding is so central, so it's great to be with you all.

Liz Theoharis:

As Shoshana was saying, The Poor People's Campaign, and I'm taking it a little bit that that folks are a little bit familiar. We launched about three years ago, we're the largest and the most expansive wave of nonviolent civil [inaudible 00:07:45], and have kept on building ever since. That was in 2018, in 2019, we marched into the Budget Committee of the House of Representatives with a Poor People's Moral Budget. Where we said, we found the money and that if you cut our military budget in half, if you enact a fair taxation system, and if you invest in things like social programmes, uplift of living wages, health care, then not only can we address inequality and poverty in a real way, but have a more just world in the process.

Liz Theoharis:

And so this most recent work that we're doing, I think is very connected to the idea. I mean, from the beginning of how do we have a kind of intersectional lens, and how do we have an organizing movement that is about looking at these issues. We talk about five interlocking injustices. We start with the problem of systemic racism, especially how it plays out in attack on voting rights, on the attack on our democracy. Especially how it plays out in our mass incarceration system, how it plays out in an unjust immigration system, and mistreatment of native and indigenous peoples.

Liz Theoharis:

We then connect that to poverty, to the fact that there are 140 million people who are poor, or one storm, one health care crisis, one job loss, one emergency from economic ruin. We then see the destruction of the earth, ecological devastation, and those that are hurt first and worst, really at the center of the kind of intersectional work we're trying to do. And then we take on militarism and the war economy, right? The fact that this nation, as Dr. King called, "The greatest purveyor of violence in the world." That this nation spends 53 cents of every discretionary dollar on the military, and less than 15 cents on health care, education, living wage, other anti-poverty programmes all combined.

Liz Theoharis:

And we understand because people have helped us to see, including activists like yourselves that even if we cut the military budget of the United States in half, we would still have a bigger military budget than hundreds of nations in the world combined, and a bigger budget than all of the countries with the largest military budgets, that we are always talking about being our enemies and our threats, all of them combined, we would still have a larger military. And so you see that plainly, simply right there that militarism in this war economy is connected to a racist, white supremacist system, it's connected to a poverty producing system.

Liz Theoharis:

And that both, in the kind of devaluing of life as happens in forever wars, as well as the putting of resources and money into the hands of military contractors, and not into the lives and livelihoods of the poor, in this country or across the world, that this is indeed a nation that as Dr. King talked about is approaching spiritual death. So just last week, inspired by the platform, and agenda, and priorities, and demands that come out of The Poor People's Campaign, a national call for more revival, some congressional leaders, some representatives actually introduced a new resolution. It's called The Third Reconstruction, fully addressing poverty and low wages from the bottom up.

Liz Theoharis:

And I think in it offers some of both how we understand the intersection of these different injustices, as well as the kinds of demands that I think are very in line with the work you all are doing, about how we can't really get at this forever wars and militarization of our whole world and our communities, without also seeing the connection to the impact that all of these issues are having, on especially poor and low income people. So I wanted to say a little bit about actually in the resolution, and if people are interested, I know you all have a lot of good resources, but The Poor People's Campaign puts out a lot of resources on militarism, on the ending of forever wars, on the connection and the intersection of these issues.

Liz Theoharis:

You can go to [thepoorpeoplescampaign.org](http://thepoorpeoplescampaign.org) we have a whole set of fact sheets for every state that's represented here, there's a kind of what demilitarizing your state would look like, and what kind of programmes to increase healthcare, expand health care, or address issues of poverty, or curb this problem of mass incarceration, what impact it would have and how folks are being connected through these issues. Also they'll have the agenda and the priorities and this resolution.

Liz Theoharis:

So, I wanted to read a little bit of it, because I think it just is so in line, but that we set up a series of the kind of analysis of the problems that are in our society, everything from the 800,000 lives that have been killed and lost, because of war since 2001, to the military budget, and these issues. And then we set up kind of a set of resolves, what kind of resolve the nation needs to have, what kind of priorities our country can have, and about demilitarizing United States foreign policy, our borders, our policing systems, and then investing. So ending that kind of military demilitarization, and then investing the resources instead in programmes of social uplift.

Liz Theoharis:

And so we have proposed, as The Poor People's Campaign, of cutting the military budget and half. Our congressional representatives have suggested starting with cutting at least 10%, we won't stop until we get a lot higher than that, but this is their resolution not ours. And then including a just transition for workers and militarized industries. We call for ending forever wars, and repealing existing authorizations for the use of military force. We talk about restoring Congress's war powers, including over the limited uses of force, in terms of airstrikes, drone attacks, these kinds of things.

Liz Theoharis:

We talk about how we need to recognize the three pillars of foreign policy, in terms of diplomacy and development of defense, and to pursuing diplomacy over war, meaning that we have to reconsider military deployments, we have to institute a nuclear non first use commitment, we have to move towards nuclear disarmament, and curtailing of economic sanctions that are happening in the name of kind of war across the world. When it comes to the U.S., we're also talking about things like repealing The 1033 Programme, right? Where military grade equipment and training is being used in our local law enforcement, I'm sure folks are very familiar with this.

Liz Theoharis:

But we also see the connection to ending mass incarceration, ending kind of violent policing, making sure that we didn't demilitarize our border, making sure that the kind of militarization of our communities is a part of the kind of racist and anti-poor policies that are really at the center. And so I

think in that spirit, we agree from our own experience, and then from our assessment of history, with someone like Dr. King who says that, that you cannot actually fully address racism, you can't take on economic exploitation and poverty, you can't undo this militarized world that we're living in, we can't save the planet, and everything that's living in and on it, without actually doing it all.

Liz Theoharis:

And so, to us it's so important that we don't have, you know, peace folk over here, and voting rights and racial justice folks over here, and anti-poverty folks over here and environmental folks over here, there's a space for all of those struggles and campaigns and silos. But that if we're really serious about a moral revolution of values, if we're really serious about challenging the immorality of the current policies and structures, that don't just determine life for the poor in the United States, but impact poor folks across the world, then we have to kind of have a bottom up, what we call fusion movement.

Liz Theoharis:

Bring people together across racial and economic and geographical lines, all the lines that divide into a powerful movement of the people from below, and where we can kind of lift from the bottom so that everybody can rise. And so just excited to be here with you all this evening, and be able to put out a little of that analysis, and further invite you all into connection, and collaboration with a movement that is growing. That involves and is led by many of you, and needs all of you.

Shoshana Abrams:

Wonderful, thank you so much, Reverend Dr. Liz Theoharis. I mean, wonderful presentation, and also good to know how you think about this issue and the interconnectedness. But also, I love the approach of abundance, the approach of collaboration and coalition and that we can't do it without each other. And that's something we've been talking about a lot as a network, and really good to hear you amplify that.

Shoshana Abrams:

And so we're ready for a couple questions, we have about five to seven minutes for a couple questions. So if you have questions, go ahead and put them in the Chat, where you can use the Raise Hand function on Zoom and I will call on you. So, Ben Bloom asks in the Chat, "What specific DoD program." So Department of Defense programs. "Would you cut from their budget?" I don't know if you have some examples from that bill?

Liz Theoharis:

So off the top of my head, I don't have specific ones. We've had about bunch of folks that have helped us analyze a bunch of different bills, especially closing down a bunch of the bases we have in 800 base military bases across the world, a bunch of the money that's going for weapons that are not even used anymore, there's a lot of different specific pieces where people have pointed out to us that we should and can cut, and so I'm not great to speak off the cuff about all of it right now. But again, we have a lot of that analysis, a bunch of places.

Shoshana Abrams:

But it also sounds like a big piece of legislation, so there's a lot to dig into there. So Dave Minton asked a question in the Chat, he says, "Dr. Theoharis, your and Dr. Barber's characterization of Trump as an

[inaudible 00:21:10] so simple. Can you bring us more language for how to simply address the immorality of militarization?"

Liz Theoharis:

Yeah, I think there's two aspects of militarization that I think are pretty simple, and are what's so wrong about militarism. I mean, one is, as Dr. King talks about the cruel manipulation of the poor, having poor people in a kind of poverty draft in this country, that go and fight poor people across the world, and fight rich people's war. And so there's this cruel manipulation part of it of, a death dealing society, that doesn't have to be, that is not the kind of world we want to live in, the kind of world we want to raise our grandchildren and children in. And then there's just the wrongness, the meanness, the immorality of war, especially the way that war is waged today.

Liz Theoharis:

And then there's this kind of war economy, and kind of some of more of the economic and domestic implications of the militarized budgets, and any kind of system that were a part of. That, again, it never surprises me, it never goes over that when you talk about the fact that we spend so much more resources on war, and yet are not taking care of veterans, right? I mean, 40% of homeless adults, single adults who are homeless are veterans. We're not taking care of frontline troops, thousands and thousands qualify with their families for federal benefits for welfare programmes, because they're making so little money.

Liz Theoharis:

And so when you look at this kind of war economy, and the fact that so much money is going into the hands of these military contractors, and it means that, again, in the words of Dr. King, it's turning a war on poverty into a skirmish, because all of these resources are going to fight wars, for one that never end. And what is accomplished, other than the kind of poisoning of water systems, and the destabilizing of governments. And it doesn't make this nation, for sure any safer, and so to me, it's both the kind of immorality of war and this cruel manipulation, as well as the problem of a war economy, that values military spending over healthcare, over living wages. And so to me, that's part of how we start to get at what's wrong with the militarization of our communities.

Shoshana Abrams:

Thank you. Gretchen, do you want to ask your question?

Gretchen:

Thank you so much, this is fantastic. So we're just going off on the same word economy, and you said adjusting transition to workers in the defense contractor. So how do we envision... I mean, this is my whole question, how do you make peace more profitable? How do you see that happening? Because we get that argument all the time, right? So.

Liz Theoharis:

No, I think that's really important, and war isn't just expensive because we spend so much money on it, the money that we spend on war, it costs more than the money we spend on feeding people, right? So if you invest the same amount of money into food programs, into expanding snap, the nation will actually make money back on feeding people, and it loses money on killing people, as well as it's wrong, right.

Liz Theoharis:

And so I think that some of the statistics and some of the analysis I know you all have done, but we also have, and can surely share, that I think starts to show that reality, that shows that every dollar invested in the military actually costs society more, not just in the loss of life, not just in the sending our people over to fight in these endless wars, but also just because of graft and corruption in military contractors. And not even just corruption, just the way it's structured, like the way that that works, as opposed to for every dollar we invest in ending childhood poverty, we save \$7 in the future, but for every dollar we invest in the military, we lose some of that money.

Liz Theoharis:

Again, for those of us that are the choir that don't believe in militarization, but just even if you're talking about what's economically smart for the nation. And then you have to talk about this morality, because we don't want to just talk about the fact that it saved us money, it's also wrong. So we have to say that. But to those that think that they're going to lose their jobs, or that their cousin is going to, or that this is the only way they were able to get college. It's how do you open up people's thinking, both to show them the real costs of war, and of military spending, but then also, that it doesn't have to be this way, like, this isn't as good as it gets.

Liz Theoharis:

The fact that you can only get a college education if you sign up for the draft, that's wrong. The amount of money that we bailed Wall Street out in the first week of a pandemic, was enough to forgive all student debt. So we got the resources, the question is, how do we use those in a way that actually lifts society up, and spending money on war? and military doesn't do that.

Liz Theoharis:

Just like spending money on fossil fuels doesn't do that, right? And just like the fossil fuel industry, and are some of the greatest purveyors of war and profiteers, and all of the connections of these things. But I think actually sometimes going with some of those facts, and then also appealing to the immorality of it all, can be effective.

Shoshana Abrams:

Thank you so much. So there are a lot of questions in the Chat, some really nitty gritty about the details of the bill, and some specific policy positions. I'm going to ask if we can send some links in the Chat, or in the follow up email so that you all can peruse, the website will direct you to specific things about the bill, and those fact sheets that Liz mentioned.

Shoshana Abrams:

And I think we're going to wrap up for tonight, thank you all for your questions, if you have questions, you can send them to Jim and I, and we'll try and answer them, or pass the ones along that we can't answer. Reverend Dr. Liz Theoharis, thank you so much for being with us tonight, it's really wonderful to hear your framing and to know that we're in this work with you.

Shoshana Abrams:

In the preparation for this, I read a quote that you said, which is, "We are going to keep on making this holy trouble." And I don't know if you were quoting someone else, but it really spoke to me, that this is

holy trouble. We're making trouble, and we're doing it together in coalition, and this intersectional lens, this community that we're building will only make it stronger. So thank you so much. Any last words you want to leave us with?

Liz Theoharis:

No, but we always say in The Poor People's Campaign, forward together and not one step back, so I leave with that, but it's great to be with everyone.

Shoshana Abrams:

Wonderful. Thank you so much, Liz. All right. Well, I hope you feel inspired, I feel very inspired by hearing that presentation, and we will send those resources in the follow up email. I know many of you are already working with local Poor People's Campaign chapters, I also know that you have actually been on lobby visits with the coalition with folks from Poor People's Campaign. So I hope this is just an inspiring moment for you to connect with these other movements, that have similar and shared goals as ours.

Shoshana Abrams:

So, just a quick update on the lobbying you all are doing around the country. So far, we have had 660 of you on lobby visits so far this year. Just to give you... I mean, that sounds like a big number, I think, but just to give you the context. Those 666 people have been on 190 lobby visits just this year, we're at the very beginning of June. That number compared to 2019, pre-pandemic, that number was 158, and last year, it was 127. So the number again, you all have lobbied 190 times so far this year, it's absolutely incredible. I'm really proud of our network, and how much you've persevered, and I think it really shows in our lobby visits.

Shoshana Abrams:

And I also want to tell you, I've been doing some fact finding with Justin, our data strategist, and we found that out of the 17 sponsors, co-sponsors on the Senate bill, you all have lobbied 15 of them since 2018. So, it's hard to show a direct correlation from a lobby visit to signing on to a bill, but you all have been in a huge percentage of those senate offices, and it makes a difference, building those relationships and having that face time with your members.

Shoshana Abrams:

So we don't have very much time, but I'd love if we could hear one story. On the last action sheet, we asked folks to think about connecting, or doing something related to the Memorial Day holiday this past weekend. And I know some folks did that, so if your team did an action, or a letter to the editor around Memorial Day, I'd love for you to use the Raise Hand function on Zoom and just tell us about it briefly. So, if your team did something around Memorial Day occasion. Eugenia, do you want to unmute?

Eugenia:

There was an article in our local paper about the exhibit of 7,000 booths in Newport, and we got out a letter immediately saying that so many other people had died besides those represented by the military, and it was published in yesterday's local paper.

Shoshana Abrams:

Wonderful, thank you so much, Eugenia. Thank you for sharing that, for the team being so on top of the media to be able to get something published so quickly. Anyone else want to share their story of something they did over Memorial Day holiday? All right, I have one more prompt. Marjorie, do you want to share? You can unmute.

Speaker 5:

Yeah, I'm [inaudible 00:33:36], and with help from the lobbying group here at Kendall, in Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, I drafted an op-ed piece, which described the fate of a high school friend of mine who lost his mind in Vietnam, and linked that to the lies that he encountered, as having prompted this whole enterprise, so that he felt betrayed by our country. And one reason why those laws slid by so easily, was that there was no significant debate in the Congress, about undertaking that enterprise, except the extremely perfunctory bay of Tonkin Resolution, and that the Congress really must not any longer dodge the responsibility that the constitution assigns to it, of deliberating the decision to go to war.

Speaker 5:

I notice on my screen Sarah Freeman-Woolpert, hi there? Who was a hugely assist, helpful and inspiring in moving this little project forward. There's a consortium of newspapers in this part of the state, six of them, and this consortium itself, picked up the piece and ran it in all six papers.

Shoshana Abrams:

Wow, congratulations, thank you so much for sharing that with us.

Speaker 5:

Sure.

Shoshana Abrams:

All right, let's hear one more story, and the story that I'm looking for is somewhat... I know that some folks, some teams are fully vaccinated, if you have gathered together in person with your team, so far I'd love to hear about it, I know some folks are planning it currently, but if you've gathered, I just love to hear what you all did together and how it felt to be together again? You can use the Raise Hand function on Zoom to share.

Bob:

[inaudible 00:36:05].

Shoshana Abrams:

Bob, I can hear you.

Bob:

Yeah. Anyway, we met on the lawn of Asheville Friends Meeting, and we're all vaccinated, and it was just absolutely wonderful. I guess we had eight of us, and we gave each other hugs, and just shared some of our work, some of our personal what's happened to us, but also our work that we've done together. And Marjorie Yulin made a sheet cake, and it was just fabulous, and that was a wonderful moment.

Shoshana Abrams:

Wonderful. Thank you all so much, thank you for sharing that with us. All right. So we are going to move on to our policy update. Sorry, Julia, for taking some of your time in your update. Julia is going to give us our policy update, and then we'll have some time for questions with Jim and Julia. Take it away.

Julia:

Hi, everyone, it's great to see all of your faces as usual tonight, and feeling very inspired by the stories and numbers that Shoshana shared, so thanks for that. I will start with the house and my policy update, which is where we have Representative Lee's bill to repeal the 2002 AUMF H.R.256, which I know you all know all about. The bill now has 134 co-sponsors, including nine Republicans, but there are still many representatives who have either co-sponsored or voted for legislation to repeal the 2002 AUMF in the past, and to have not yet co-sponsored H.R.256.

Julia:

Ken Bach from Colorado, for example, voted for the bill out of the House Foreign Affairs Committee back in March, but hasn't joined the bill as a co-sponsor yet. He was one of two Republicans that voted for the passage of the bill out of the Foreign Affairs Committee, the other being Peter Meyer from Michigan, who was already a co-sponsor on the bill, but the point is that we still have our work cut out for us. And with that, I'll repeat what I know y'all have heard over and over again at this point, which is that your representatives need to hear from you, even if it's for the second, third or fourth time.

Julia:

You all have been lobbying on this issue for six months now, and persistence is really key at this moment. House staff are still hoping that H.R.256 will be brought to a vote as a standalone bill on the House floor very soon. And we actually heard from representative Lee's office last week that the bill could be put on the calendar this summer. The staff are really eager to move forward though, so they're considering other avenues for AUMF appeal as well, both in the annual defense policy bill, and in the defense spending bill.

Julia:

So Representative Lee's staffers know that FCNL's Advocacy teams are responsible for a large number of the co-sponsors, And I'm so glad that Shoshana was able to pull some numbers, to really show you all how important it is to have you guys lobbying on this issue. It's something that we hear week after week from Representative Lee's office. They totally feel the grassroots energy, and we depend on it to really get our foot in the door with a lot of offices. So the ball is rolling on this issue, and we really need your help to make sure that we get to the finish line this summer.

Julia:

So as eager as we all are to get this law off the books and move on to bigger things, like the 2001 AUMF, we have to maintain pressure on Congress to actually get this vote scheduled on the calendar. So moving on to the Senate, the efforts to repeal the 2002 AUMF has really picked up steam since we last spoke. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Menendez, has said that he plans to take up S.J.Res.10, to repeal the 2002 and 1991 AUMF's, whenever their next business meeting is, which could be as early as this month, early this month, sorry.

Julia:

So this is a huge deal, it will be the first time a Senate committee has ever marked up legislation to repeal the 2002 AUMF, and we have an incredible opportunity right now to hit the pavement and make sure the Senate Foreign Relations Committee approves S.J.Res.10. So we're keeping a close eye on the calendar, and as soon as the markup is scheduled, we'll be sending an action alert for all of you to share with your networks.

Julia:

If your senator is on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, please set up a meeting or contact the staffer you've been in contact with before, to ask them to co-sponsor the bill and vote to advance S.J.Res.10 in committee. For those of you whose senators are not on the committee, we still want your senator to co-sponsor the bill, and if they're a Democrat, we want them to bring on a Republican friend with them. Do not be afraid to ask them who their friends are across the aisle, or if they're already talking with Republican offices about 2002 AUMF repeal.

Julia:

There are 16 co-sponsors on S.J.Res.10., and five of them are Republicans, but we have not seen a Republican join this bill since March, so building bipartisan support for the bill now will really help us move the needle, when it's considered by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which as I said it could be early this month. Menendez made his announcement that he's looking to mark up this bill just two or three weeks ago. And Senators Cain and Young are really eager to move the bill forward as well, they're doing the rounds to make it happen.

Julia:

Just recently, they actually had an event at The Heritage Foundation, where they talked about S.J.Res.10, and explained that repealing the 1991 and 2002 AUMF, is really a confidence building step. It's one that exercises Congress's war powers muscles, and builds the political will to pursue greater War Powers Reform. Senator Young also talked about how repealing the 2002 AUMF, would actually bolster the greater effort behind War Powers Reform, because it would solidify in everyone's minds, the difference between the 2001 and the 2002 AUMFs, which as we all know, continues to be a point of confusion for a lot of members of Congress as well as their staff.

Julia:

So in the Senate, a staffer may say that their boss is generally supportive of looking at AUMF Reform, but would like to take a more holistic approach. We hear this a lot, that 2002 AUMF repeal isn't enough, or that repeal and War Powers Reforms should happen simultaneously. And in response to this, you can always remind them that repealing the 2002 Iraq AUMF, first of all would have no effect on current military operations, but secondly, ultimately, repealing the 2002 AUMF is the first step toward addressing, both the 2001 AUMF reform and War Powers Reform. We all walk before we run, and the same logic applies here.

Julia:

On the House side, given that H.R.256 has already passed through the Foreign Affairs Committee, and is ready as ever for the floor, you might hear staffers tell you that their boss is supportive of AUMF repeal, and that they'll vote for the measure, but won't be co-sponsoring the bill at this time. To that I'd really

encourage you to be direct, and say, "We think this bill might not come to a floor vote, unless more representatives actually join on as co-sponsors." And then ask them, "Will you take the next step and co-sponsor this bill, that you believe in, to make sure that it's brought to a vote on the House floor?"

Julia:

I know it can be really uncomfortable to speak so willfully, but we really want staff to know how much we care about this issue, and to also give them the space to really answer our questions. Sit in the silence, I promise, they will answer your questions when you speak to them this directly. And ultimately, it's really helpful to us to get an idea of what their concerns are. So you can always follow up and ask them, what their boss's concerns are about co-sponsoring the bill, when they're already planning on voting for it, and that just really helps us get an idea of what is holding members back from taking that next step.

Julia:

So I will leave it there, and just say that your lobbying efforts are so critical right now, and we're so grateful to do this work with all of you, in partnership with you all, and Jim and I are looking forward to answering your questions.

Shoshana Abrams:

Thank you so much, Julia, for both giving us an update, but also helping us address some of the things that I know our teams are hearing from their members of Congress on this. There are some questions already in the Chat, we'll get to as many as we can, and please send me an email if we don't get to your questions, because I will answer them, I promise.

Shoshana Abrams:

So Dave Mendon asked a couple questions, I'm going to ask the two of them. And so the question was, "Why can't Menendez say when the committee will exactly meet, or [inaudible 00:45:46] what will come up?" How does that work?

Julia:

From leadership's perspective, whether or not Menendez supports this measure or not, he really wants to make sure that he's spending the committee's time on something that's actually viable, something that will actually go to the floor, will be scheduled for a floor vote. So from his perspective, he doesn't want to spend committee time on something that wouldn't be possible on the floor. So, for example, we're thinking about the House, and as I said, we're really encouraging representatives to co-sponsor the bill, not only because we want their support, and because we want it to pass, but we also want the House leadership to even consider it for a floor vote. So, Gregory Meeks in the House was really critical to that effort, because he chairs the Foreign Affairs Committee, and he really cares about this issue.

Julia:

So for Menendez, he just wants to see that there's enough interest within the committee, and broadly in the Senate, that this is a waste of the committee's time, because he's prioritizing and time managing a lot of different legislative initiatives, and doesn't want to spend time on something that isn't going anywhere, frankly. That's a great-

Shoshana Abrams:

Great, thank you so much. So the second question, part of his question is that their democratic senator said that they would reach out to Cane, to give support [inaudible 00:47:19] ahead of him, in terms of bringing Republicans on. Do you have any thoughts about that kind of hesitation? And maybe Jim has some thoughts, or maybe he's heard this before? It's not one I've heard before.

Julia:

I'm not sure if Jim has thoughts on this, but in terms of working ahead of Cane's office, I can totally understand not wanting to cross any lines or broach someone's territory or anything like that, but I do think that just keeping each other in the loop is something that in my mind, is super helpful to everyone. To us, to congressional offices, they're managing so much, and for the staffers, particularly, maintaining those lines of communication is really helpful to them, and ultimately helps them do their job better.

Julia:

So I would say that if you're talking to a staffer, who sort of gives you that kind of response, I would just ask them to sort of ask Cane's staff what we say to congressional staff in our lobby visits, which is how best can we support you? Are there any connections that I can make for you, I know that XYZ person, and I think that they might be helpful to you in this effort? And really making those connections for staffers who don't necessarily have the time to go cultivate a relationship with the staffer in your senators office, that can be really, really helpful.

Julia:

That might even mean coordinating with an advocacy team in another state, and getting those staffers to talk to each other. That would be my thinking, in response to this question, I'm not sure if Jim would have anything else that you'd like to add?

Jim:

Actually, Julia, you did a great update, and that was a perfect response. I would just add that in the past, certainly Senator Kaine staff, if they have another senator calling and saying, "Hey, I'm really supporting this, if there's help I can give to reach out to other people, I'd really like to do that." That's going to give them the sense that there's even more energy behind this, and help Menendez and other people feel like they can move this forward, but your answer was great.

Shoshana Abrams:

Thank you. So Christine Dunbar from New Jersey says, "Can you summarize what items would be prioritized for War Powers Reform?" So I know there's a lot of... And I don't think you need to go into every detail, I'll just say that now, because there's lots of War Powers Reform pieces of legislation, but what are some of the top lines of those conversations that are happening?

Julia:

So this gets a bit into the [inaudible 00:49:52], which Heather would be able to address a lot better, as would my colleague, Elizabeth. But I think from my perspective, as a person who's been working on this issues and does not have a law degree, a lot of it really has to do with definitions, defining what hostilities actually means, and what types of hostilities require congressional approval, or that consultation with Congress. And I will put in the Chat, Heather Brendan Smith's war powers issue brief,

which you can read about a little bit more, about the War Powers Act, and the conversations around War Powers Reform. But I think that defining things like hostilities is a really big point of contention and debate.

Julia:

There's also a lot of conversation around just increasing reporting requirements, and also the timeline in which the executive branch has to actually report to Congress what's being done. But even separately, from more powers reformed, there are also reporting requirements that Congress has passed, asking the executive branch to simply provide the legal and policy frameworks, for the use of lethal force abroad.

Julia:

So I think that there are other avenues also, to sort of just get more information before we even talk about War Powers Reform itself, just because that's such a big conversation, and there are laws already in place, that say that the executive branch every six months needs to report on what's being done, under the AUMF, and on an annual basis, like the sort of policy and legal frameworks that are guiding their thinking on executive war powers itself. So there's definitely levels to it, and I will just leave it there, because it is a very, very complicated and layered discussion around [inaudible 00:51:50].

Shoshana Abrams:

Great, thank you so much, Julia. And so Anthony Robinson from Iowa asked, "Does the Senate Committee on armed services, have a role in the conversation about S.G.Res.10 [inaudible 00:52:04] in the Senate?

Julia:

Yeah. So it really depends on how this bill, and how AUMF appeal actually moves forward. So S.J.Res.10 could be passed on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, it could go on to a floor vote. But with defense policy bill season upon us, the armed services committees are the committees of jurisdiction for the National Defense Authorization Act, which is the annual defense policy bill. So the short answer is yes, that would be the case if 2000 AUMF appeal did not happen through a standalone bill like S.J.Res.10.

Julia:

That's my understanding, at least, correct me if I'm wrong, Jim or Elizabeth, if you have anything else to add, but it really just depends on whether S.J.Res.10 has actually passed as a standalone bill, otherwise, we'll have senators who would like to move AUMF repeal forward, by adding it as a provision to the NDAA, which the armed services committees draft.

Jim:

You're absolutely right from my point of view, and I would just say to Eugenia, Senator Lee co-sponsoring this legislation, which I don't think he will do, but asking him to do that or speak out would also really move this forward, because even though he doesn't have the committee of jurisdiction as chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee, his voice makes a lot of difference, in terms of how Congress addresses this, so that's a really important lobby visit you have tomorrow.

Shoshana Abrams:

Great, thank you. So one last question Julia as I let you off the hook tonight. Lori and Kevin in Las Vegas say, "What is the real reason people who believe in the repeal would not co-sponsor the bill?"

Julia:

You know, I wish I knew, no. I think that it is politics, frankly, and that's the trouble. There's a real difference between policy and politics, and you might have certain policy views that would hurt a member politically, either with their constituencies or with other members of Congress, within their party or across the aisle who would feel alienated by you so overtly supporting such a piece of legislation. So I would say it comes down to that distinction between policy and politics, and unfortunately, members of Congress are notoriously self preserving, they want to maintain their legislative relationships, and they want to get reelected.

Julia:

And on the constituents, sort of part of my answer there, I think, we all know this, we have conversations about AUMF repeal all the time, and we know that we as the American people have been fearmongered for decades, and we have people in Congress still telling us that repealing the AUMF would somehow inhibit the president's ability from protecting U.S. national security. Which we know is not true, because the president does have constitutional authority to protect the United States against imminent attack, absent any AUMF, but I think that a lot of people sort of use that as a crutch. to say that they can't co-sponsor a bill.

Julia:

Because frankly, constituencies don't notice whether you vote for a bill or not, but they're more likely to notice if you co-sponsor it, and they may be fearful for their own security, which is totally fine. Because that's what we've been told for decades, and you all are so well versed on these issues, that it's the kind of thing that we just talk to our friends and family about, because we have a lot of unlearning to do as a population. So that's what I'll say about that.

Shoshana Abrams:

Great, thank you so much, Julia. We don't have time for any more questions, but luckily, Julia is here, I can send emails to her, and she always sends me back very quickly, with good responses to your questions. So send me an email with your questions, especially if you have an upcoming lobby visit, and you have a question about framing, we will get back to you quickly about your question or the situation that you're in.

Shoshana Abrams:

I want to quickly introduce who Julia is working with, and another resource that you all have, as Heather is on parental leave. So some of you might know Elizabeth Beavers, she is currently serving as our consultant with FCNL during Heather's parental leave, and we're really happy to have her with us. She has already been hitting the hill with Julia, and will be our advocacy team lobbyist and lawyer. Not representing the Advocacy team, but representing truth. And she's really going to help us repeal the 2002 AUMF this year, I'm sure of it.

Shoshana Abrams:

So prior to becoming an independent consultant, Elizabeth served as associate policy director for the Indivisible Project, a grassroots movement organizing to influence Congress and build progressive power. Elizabeth led the organization's advocacy efforts on foreign policy and national security, diplomacy and human rights. Before that, Elizabeth was a senior campaigner on national security and human rights for the U.S. section of Amnesty International. She also worked with FCNL on this portfolio before, and has worked with us for a very long time.

Shoshana Abrams:

Elizabeth holds an LLM from Georgetown University Law Center in national security and international human rights. She's a member of the North Carolina State Bar, and received her juris doctorate from Regent University School of Law. So she is really a wonderful resource, we're really excited to have her with us. Elizabeth, you want to say a quick hello?

Elizabeth Beavers:

Yeah, I'd love to, I know we're just about out of time, but I can't help myself because I see so many friends here. Facebook friends, Twitter friends, old friends from former FCNL days and beyond. I am so excited to be back, I'm not always in the FCNL family, but directly in the FCNL family, and Heather is a good friend of mine and has graciously entrusted me with her portfolio, while she is taking care of her wonderful new baby. And I am super honored to work with Julia, who obviously, as you all know, and we saw here tonight is just a superstar.

Elizabeth Beavers:

And so we've all been working together to end these wars for so many years, let's get it done. I'm excited to work with you all, again, and I'm just really looking forward to everything we have coming up. So thank you all for welcoming me so warmly, and Shoshana and Jim for organizing such a great call.

Shoshana Abrams:

Wonderful. Thank you so much, Elizabeth, you'll be hearing more from all of our lobbyists. So, really great to have you on this call tonight, I'm not going to read what's on their action sheet, but you should, there's really good information on the action sheet to direct your team, as you're planning your actions this month. Our June communicator calls are on the 10th and the 24th, we have a new member training for anyone who's looking for a refresher, or for new people who've just joined their teams on the 29th, sorry, June 29th, and our next national call is on July 7th.

Shoshana Abrams:

I also should have done this at the beginning of the call, but congratulations and welcome to our new team in Central New Jersey. I know that they've been trained up and ready to get started, and really excited to have you with us. All right, that's all, we did it all in an hour. Thank you all so much for being with us tonight, feel free to unmute, and goodnight.

Speaker 10:

Goodnight.

Speaker 10:

[crosstalk 01:00:26].

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