

Quaker FAQs About FCNL

1. **Question: What can we do that will make a difference?**
 - Resource: *Ways to Witness with FCNL*

2. **Question: Is lobbying really that effective?**
 - Yes! FCNL's long history of persistent advocacy has demonstrated the impact of constituent lobbying on Congress time and time again. There's also *research by the Congressional Management Foundation* showing that constituent lobby visits are the single most effective tactic to influence members of Congress on policy issues.
 - Persistence and taking a realistic view of the long game in building relationships with congressional offices is what makes lobbying powerful. **Resource:** fcnl.org/impact

3. **Question: I've sent letters to my member of Congress, but they always send back only form letters. It doesn't feel like they listen to me. Why should I bother?**
 - FCNL's advocacy and lobbying is about building long-term relationships with congressional offices. And you get out of relationships what you put into them.
 - Sending an email to Congress does have an impact, but we see it as a first step in a longer process of relational advocacy.
 - Have you ever responded to a form letter? Written a letter to the editor naming your representative? Requested a face-to-face lobby visit to have a conversation?
 - *Research by the Congressional Management Foundation* has indicated that Congress is overwhelmed with mass quantities of form letters and other low-quality communications from constituents. The more personalized and consistent your communication, the more powerful it is. **Resource:** [CMF Citizen-Centric Advocacy](#)

4. **Question: Is FCNL nonpartisan, and what does that mean?**
 - Yes, FCNL is nonpartisan. For the organization, nonpartisanship is a call to look deeper than the labels we use to align ourselves into groups and political parties. From this light, non-partisanship looks like a receptivity to insight from many sources.
 - The political party that someone identifies with says something important about their orientation and beliefs. It is not irrelevant. Yet to focus primarily on that identifier as a litmus test for engagement ignores the nuances of individual motivations and limits our access to a potential source of divine truth.
 - It means that FCNL lobbyists and constituents can often get meetings with offices that are not open to talking with our more partisan colleagues.

5. **Question: How does FCNL stay connected with what is happening in Quaker communities?**

- FCNL is governed by Quakers from around the country appointed by Quaker yearly meetings/organizations and FCNL's own Nominating Committee to serve on the FCNL General Committee. **Resource:** fcnl.org/governance
- Most of the approximately 180 Friends on FCNL's General Committee have been appointed by 27 Yearly Meetings and five national Friends' organizations. The General Committee meets each November to conduct business at FCNL's Annual Meeting. The standing committees oversee FCNL between Annual Meetings.
- These governors provide channels of communication between FCNL and Friends around the country and provides a direct line of accountability from the organization to those bodies around the nation.
- FCNL is composed of two distinct organizations: the Friends Committee on National Legislation, a lobbying organization [501(c)4]; and the FCNL Education Fund, a charitable organization [501(c)3]. Both are nonpartisan, in the public interest, and governed by members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).

6. Question: How does FCNL collaborate with other Quaker organizations?

- Several Quaker organizations have representatives on the General Committee.
- We are in regular conversation with heads and staff at other organizations and collaborate when our priorities align.
- One of the strengths of Quakerism is the number of passionate Friends working for change in a variety of ways, each of us living up to the light that's been given us.

7. Question: How does FCNL decide what to lobby on?

- FCNL advocates on issues and policies identified as concerns by Quakers around the country. For each session of Congress, FCNL seek Friends' input as to what is most pressing for the FCNL community to focus on. Staff are guided by those approved priorities and take specific legislative advocacy opportunities that arise during that session of Congress. **Resources:** <https://fcnl.org/priorities> | <https://fcnl.org/weseeks>

8. Question: Why does FCNL take the positions it does?

- FCNL stances arise from a combination of those priorities discerned by Friends and the practicalities of Congress. We must ensure our efforts can influence legislation, so we meet Congress where it is while pushing for a more transformative vision.
- There is a creative tension between that prophetic vision for the world we seek and FCNL's pragmatic witness for incremental policy change. We are often challenged by that tension. Sometimes the Quaker model of lobbying and respectful engagement with government can feel too much like compromise.

- However, harm reduction has been a helpful frame for the frustrating but necessary work of incremental change and requires us to gauge the cost/benefit of engaging or not engaging. Do you work to reduce some harm now, or focus on more radical but less sure change in the future? What's the harm done if you view people you disagree with as disposable or not worth your time? How does your decision serve to reinforce or transform existing power structures and oppressive systems? These are all necessary queries to consider alongside this question. **Resource:** <https://fcnl.org/about>

9. Question: What does my donation pay for?

- When you donate to FCNL the c4, your donation goes directly towards supporting lobbyists walking the halls of Congress working towards peace and justice.