

 Friends Committee on National Legislation

Washington Newsletter

July/August 2023 » No. 815

FRIENDS COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL LEGISLATION

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of Faithful
Lobbying**

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80 YEARS

Lobbying with Quakers



Eighty Years of Impact

By Kristen Archer



As the oldest registered religious lobby in Washington, D.C., it would be easy for the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) to celebrate its accomplishments and ride off into the sunset. After all, the organization has done a lot in 80 years.

But that is not FCNL's way. Since 1943, FCNL has been at the forefront of many important social movements, faithfully lobbying Congress and 15 successive presidential administrations to advance peace, justice, and environmental stewardship.

Today, FCNL, the FCNL Education Fund, and Friends Place on Capitol Hill form one of the most effective change agents in Washington, D.C. Its efforts to speak truth to power are deeply rooted in Quaker peace testimony and the belief that there is that of God in everyone—the foundation of its legislative policy and work for 80 years.

From defeating mandatory military training to helping thaw relations with China, FCNL's first 30 years were marked by efforts to stop violent conflict around the world and address their root causes. FCNL's advocacy resulted in laws that provided relief to Europe during and after World War II and played a significant role in creating the Peace Corps in 1961 and preventing future wars.

In the 1970s, then-FCNL Executive Secretary Ed Snyder led efforts to cancel the appropriations of \$474 million to the South Vietnamese military, expediting an end to the U.S. war in Vietnam.

A decade later, FCNL helped thaw relations with the Soviet Union and built congressional support for a series of international treaties to reduce the number of nuclear weapons and lessen the threat of war.

Then, in the 1990s, FCNL helped to ratify the UN Convention on Chemical Weapons and advocated for the United States to adopt a code of conduct on arms transfers.

It was 9/11, however, that would catalyze a pivotal, lasting shift in U.S. foreign policy.

Inspired by the leadership of Rep. Barbara Lee (CA-12)—the sole member of Congress to speak out against retaliation and going to war—FCNL sprang into action. It issued a statement urging accountability under international law and cautioning against actions that

would spark additional violence, fuel anti-Muslim sentiment, and lead to more suffering.

Although FCNL believed (and still believes) war is not the answer, President George W. Bush, and almost everyone else in Congress, thought otherwise. That turning point ignited more than two decades of endless wars, with innumerable lives violently taken.

Throughout, FCNL's grounding in Quaker faith practice remains steadfast. Its strength lies in its agility and perseverance. The organization is committed to the *long game*, often working for years to move policy through Congress. Along the way, FCNL evolved its processes to maximize its impact in catalyzing change. And the tirelessness of FCNL advocates and staff lobbyists achieved results.

"At 80, FCNL's work is far from over."

Earlier this spring, that rang true as the Senate voted to repeal the 1991 and 2002 Authorizations for Use of Military Force (AUMFs) and formally end the Gulf and Iraq Wars. The 2002 AUMF, considered a "blank check for war," is one of the dangerous, outdated laws that green-lit one of the post-9/11 wars, and has been subject to abuse ever since. FCNL and its network of advocates have lobbied tirelessly for decades for Congress to repeal the zombie legislation.

But as Executive Secretary Emeritus Joe Volk says, "These things take time."

Another hallmark of FCNL is its willingness to continually evolve. In the 1960s, FCNL's lobbying approach and geographic location positioned it amid some of the most pivotal demonstrations in recent history. From the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom and the Poor People's Campaign and Resurrection City to multiple demonstrations against the Vietnam War, FCNL regularly hosted visiting Friends, planned seminars, and supported leaders in the Civil Rights and Anti-War movements.

(Continued on page 4)

◀ The proliferation of the clarion call, War is Not the Answer, came to the forefront following 9/11 and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

(Eighty Years of Impact from page 3)

Through William Penn House, acquired in 2019 and renamed Friends Place on Capitol Hill, FCNL expanded its connection to and engagement with other organizers. It provided meals and showers, and helped to strategize effective advocacy tactics during some of the most tumultuous times our country has faced.

Today, FCNL is again at a pivotal point. Amid increasing political polarization, dangerous rhetoric, incessant gun violence, racial trauma, climate catastrophe, and rampant domestic and international injustice, FCNL adopted a new Statement of Anti-racism, Anti-bias, Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (AJEDI).

FCNL approaches each of its issue areas through this lens, from acknowledging Quaker complicity in the horrors of the Indian Boarding School era and lobbying for legislation to address it, to recognizing growth opportunities within the organization that reflect these core beliefs.

At 80, FCNL's work is far from over. As Associate General Secretary for Development Stephen Donahoe

reminds us, "80 years is just the beginning." With an eye towards the future, FCNL continues to grow through its Advocacy Teams—now in 44 states—and its expanded civic education efforts to engage more young adults in peacemaking.

FCNL serves to empower advocates, no matter where they are on their journey, to understand and participate in the political process by realizing the power of their voices in a way that transcends partisan politics.

"We are now a powerhouse of a peace and justice lobby, still grounded with the Religious Society of Friends. We're working with staff of 65 and a network of around 100,000 people across the country, some Quakers, some not, who believe in the work that we're doing and help build the power to make the change we're seeking," said Bridget Moix, FCNL general secretary.

FCNL's work is far from over; it is in the process of discerning its 2024-2028 Strategic Plan.

Kristen Archer is FCNL's social media and editorial director. She is also the managing producer of the video, "Eighty Years of Impact." It will be available by September 2023.

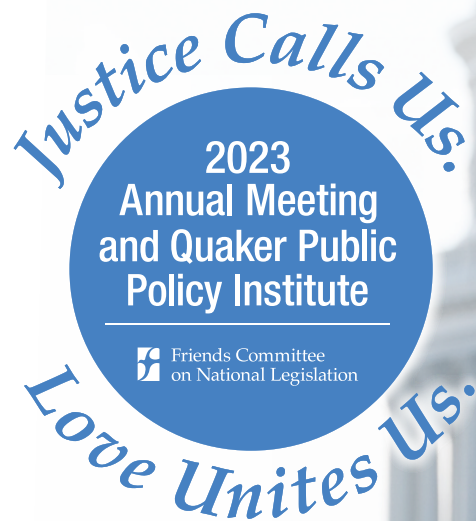


Photo by DAG Photo/FCNL

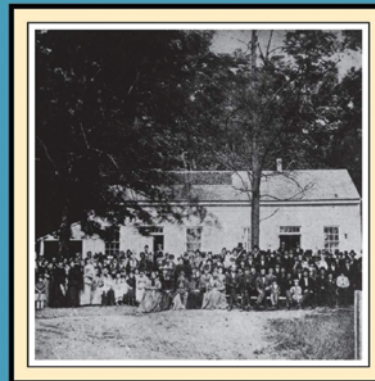
[FCNL.org/AnnualMeeting](https://www.fcnl.org/AnnualMeeting)

November 15-19, 2023
Washington, D.C., and online

Called by justice, united by love, we will join in fellowship, worship, and action. We will learn from policy experts and from each other. We will mark 80 years of Quaker advocacy in Washington and envision the next phase of FCNL's work.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF AMERICAN QUAKERISM

Orthodox Friends, 1800–1907



THOMAS D. HAMM

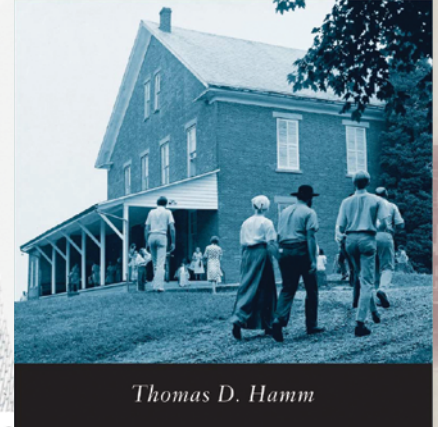


PENGUIN CLASSICS

Quaker Writings
An Anthology, 1650-1920

Edited by THOMAS D. HAMM

THE QUAKERS IN AMERICA

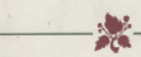


Thomas D. Hamm



Earlham College

A History, 1847-1997



Thomas D. Hamm

Q&A: Bringing Together People from the Spiritual Margins

With Dr. Thomas D. Hamm

Dr. Hamm is one of the world's leading experts on Quakers in America. He recently retired from Earlham College, where he taught U.S. and Quaker history and was curator of its collections of Quaker materials. Dr. Hamm is a member of West Richmond Friends Meeting in the New Association of Friends.

In what ways has the Religious Society of Friends changed our country?

First, Friends have been consistent advocates of religious liberty. The Flushing Remonstrance of 1658, to which Friends were central, was one of the first statements favoring liberty of conscience in American history. William Penn's colony of Pennsylvania welcomed people of all faiths.

Second, Friends have played a central role in advocating the rights of marginalized groups in American society. Friends conscientiously tried to be sure that the lands on which they were settling had been fairly purchased from their Indigenous inhabitants, and they were often outspoken critics of dispossession and broken treaties.

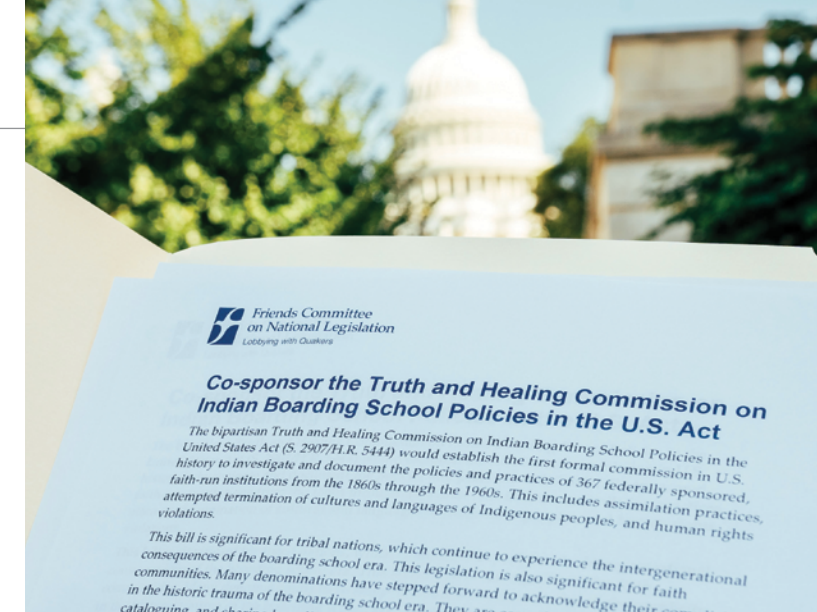
Friends such as John Woolman and Anthony Benezet were central to the rise of an antislavery movement in the Western world in the eighteenth century. In 1833, when the first national organization dedicated to the

"I see Friends as bringing together people on the spiritual margins, who find meaning in Quaker forms of worship and in the writings and example of Friends ranging from George Fox to Bayard Rustin."

immediate abolition of human slavery, the American Anti-Slavery Society, was formed, a third of its charter members were Friends.

Friends were among the earliest supporters of prison reform in the United States, pioneers in basic standards like separating child from adult prisoners.

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Advocacy Corps Succeeds in Lobbying for Truth and Healing Commission

By Nedy Velazquez



Although their term as community organizers ended in May, the commitment of the 2022-2023 Advocacy Corps to supporting Native American issues has not. For ten months, they lobbied for the establishment of the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding Schools.

On May 18, 2023, the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the United States Act (S. 1723) was reintroduced by Sen, Elizabeth Warren (MA) in the 118th Congress.

When passed, this bill would establish the first formal United States commission to investigate and document the policies and practices of the 367 federally sponsored, faith-run Indian boarding schools that were created in 1860s through the 1960s. It would also give Native Americans the opportunity to share their experiences and the impact of these schools on multiple generations.

Lobbying for this bill started during the 117th Congress when FCNL advocates worked in solidarity with Native American tribes to build bipartisan support for it. In the 117th Congress, the Truth and Healing Commission bill garnered 87 co-sponsors in the House and 26 co-sponsors in the Senate.

The Advocacy Corps' 15 young organizers helped secure more bipartisan support for the bill in the 118th Congress. Their lobbying directly resulted in adding two more senate co-sponsors.

The organizers spoke with hundreds of people about the ins and outs of the bill, creating much-needed dialogue about the importance of the bill and how it affects their communities. In Phoenix, AZ, organizer Karime Rodriguez cemented her community-building and engagement work when she spoke with over 30 high school students about the bill.

The students had been learning about American history through a Native American lens. They were knowledgeable about indigenous concepts, community, and identities, but after Karime's training, they had the tools to speak with their legislators about why they believed this bill must pass.

In South Dakota, organizer Rachel Overstreet (Choctaw Nation), from South Dakota, arranged a meeting with Rep. Dusty Johnson (SD).

FCNL Advocacy Corps members convene each summer to train on organizing and build understanding of the lobby ask. Photos by Joe Molieri and Eric Bond/FCNL

Together with five other constituents, they told him their stories of how the bill would impact them and their community.

Like Karime and Rachel, all the 15 Advocacy Corps organizers created spaces of learning and growth as they developed relationships with the staff and members of Congress. Since starting their program in August 2022, they have organized 56 lobby visits where they were joined by 107 constituents. The organizers also had 27 media engagements, mainly letters to the editor.

The 2022-2023 cohort of Advocacy Corps consisted of Jamie Canty of Newport News, VA; Aiyana Coard (Shinnecock Indian Nation) of New York, NY; China Copperstone of Briny Breezes, FL; Julie Flores-Castillo of Red Bank, NJ; Dillon Grubb of Norfolk, NE; Helina Kassa of Sandy Spring, MD; Shyamaa Khan of Amherst, MA; Meril Mousoom of St. Paul, MN; Kiran Nwakanma of Orlando, FL; Rachel Overstreet of Sioux Falls, SD; Destini Amaris Perkins of Vista, CA; Karime Rodriguez Ramirez of Phoenix, AZ; Anne Rants of Arcata, CA; Jessica Russell of McEwen, TN; Taylor Treviño of Austin, TX; and Ky'Asia Washington Blanchard of Schenectady, NY.

It's been an incredible journey to witness the 2022-2023 Advocacy Corps organizers grow in their work and their relationships within their local communities. But as they end their fellowship with FCNL, we also welcome 20 organizers who comprise the 2023-2024 Advocacy Corps. They will be lobbying on violence interrupter programs.

Nedy Velazquez is FCNL's advocacy corps coordinator.

(Q&A with Dr. Tom Hamm from page 5)

And Quakers were at the center of early movements for women's rights in the United States. Of the three central figures in the nineteenth-century movement for women's equality, two, Lucretia Mott and Susan B. Anthony, were Friends. And another Friend, Alice Paul, was central to the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920 and was the author of the Equal Rights Amendment.

Of course, today we sometimes find Friends of past generations wanting. Friends could advocate legal rights of Native Americans but still embrace "assimilation" and the annihilation of Indigenous culture and spirituality. And even abolitionist Friends were sometimes not entirely free of racism.

In what ways has the United States have changed the Religious Society of Friends?

Friends, however much they originally tried to remain separate from "the world," have over the past two centuries been unable to resist the influence of the larger American culture.

Apart from a few unyielding Conservative Friends, we take political and spiritual cues from it. On the theological left among Friends, we find influences from Buddhism, Hinduism, New Age, and a variety of other faiths and religious movements.

Thus, it is that we can have a "Jewish atheist Quaker." On the theological right, one finds Evangelical Friends who have been deeply influenced by currents in American evangelicalism and fundamentalism, ranging from charismatics in the 1970s to the mega and community church movements today.

What is FCNL's place in the overall realm of the Religious Society of Friends in the USA?

Today, FCNL mainly represents the concerns of the more liberal bodies of Friends. Evangelical Friends have focused on issues where they share affinity with the Christian Right, such as abortion and defending traditional marriage and do not see FCNL as representing their interests.

When it was founded, FCNL saw itself as a force for unity, in which different groups of Friends could work together. But the diversity of American Friends has made that increasingly difficult.

Historically, what have been FCNL's major contributions to the United States?

First, FCNL has long been one of the most respected religious lobbying groups in Washington, because of its reputation for presenting accurate information and trying to work on a bipartisan basis. Second, it is clear that FCNL played an important role in the passage of the landmark civil rights legislation of the 1960s.

How can the Religious Society of Friends remain relevant to the United States as the country nears its 250th anniversary?

Other, secular groups now are more public advocates of the marginalized in American society. I see Friends as bringing together people on the spiritual margins, who find meaning in Quaker forms of worship and in the writings and example of Friends ranging from George Fox to Bayard Rustin.

Q&A by Adlai Amor. 



The Washington Newsletter is a publication of the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) and the FCNL Education Fund, two national nonpartisan Quaker organizations working for peace, justice, and environmental stewardship.

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Design/Layout: Wesley Pinkham
Cover Photo: Stephen Donahoe

Reprinting: Encouraged with credit
Cost: Free upon request
Frequency: Published 6 times a year



Printed with vegetable ink on FSC-certified paper in a facility that uses renewable energy.