

Washington Newsletter

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Pursuing Peace Across Generations

By Bryan Bowman

This April, hundreds of people from across the country joined us in Washington, D.C., for our first-ever Friends Changeloger Weekend. Across generations, faiths, and backgrounds, we came together to deliver one clear message to Congress:

***Not Another Penny
for War on Iran.***

Our advocacy came at a critical moment for peace, just six weeks after President Donald Trump launched an illegal, immoral, and disastrous war on Iran.

In just those six weeks, we saw horrors unleashed. Hundreds of Iranian schoolgirls were killed in a U.S. airstrike. Thousands more civilians in Iran and throughout the region were killed, along with 13 members of the U.S. military. President Trump issued a genocidal threat to destroy Iran's "entire civilization." The global economy was thrown into turmoil. Regular people, already facing an affordability crisis, saw gas prices and energy bills surge. Across the globe, the cascading economic consequences threatened to throw millions of the world's most vulnerable people into hunger and poverty.



▲ Advocates from Washington state lobby the office of Senator Patty Murray on our ask: Not Another Penny for War on Iran!

From the outset of the war, FCNL and our network sprang into action, carrying forward our long history of work as a leading voice for peace in Washington, D.C.

Coming together with faith partners, grassroots advocates, and a diverse national coalition of organizations, we lobbied Congress to pass War Powers Resolutions to stop the violence. While those efforts were narrowly defeated, our collective advocacy built important momentum. Polling showed that the overwhelming majority of Americans opposed the

war, and our advocacy contributed to a growing national awareness of the immoral disparity between funding for war and funding for human needs.

As we gathered for Friends Changemaker Weekend, the Trump administration was requesting about \$200 billion in additional funding to continue the war, and we had a vital opportunity to continue building pressure for peace.

“During some of the lobby visits I joined, advocates from across generations and geographies shared why funding peace, not war, matters to them,” FCNL’s Bridget Moix wrote. “Their stories reflected a growing movement of people of conscience around the country standing up for a more just, peaceful, and resilient world.”

On lobby day, more than 300 people of all ages and backgrounds gathered on Capitol Hill. We held

more than 100 lobby meetings, while those who joined us virtually made more than 400 phone calls to their members of Congress.

One of the many groups that exemplified our intergenerational advocacy was the delegation from New Mexico.

Bruce Nelson, a grandfather from Albuquerque, New Mexico, was inspired to make the journey to D.C. to lobby Congress because he felt compelled to help ensure a better, more peaceful future for his grandchildren.

“I’ve had a very easy life,” he said. “My concern is for my four grandchildren. What kind of moral atmosphere are they going to face? Will they be able to hold on to their values in the face of a repressive regime?”

Advocating alongside Bruce was Galen Yane, a young adult advocate also from Albuquerque.

“I’ve had a very easy life. My concern is for my four grandchildren. What kind of moral atmosphere are they going to face? Will they be able to hold on to their values in the face of a repressive regime?”

"I come from a community where a lot of people are dependent on SNAP benefits and Medicaid," he said. "And I'm here to advocate for them and share their voices with Congress and say that they want their tax dollars spent on making America better and not being sent overseas on an illegal war."

Among the youngest advocates lobbying with us were high school students from New Jersey. After they met Senator Andy Kim, the senator took to social media to thank them for their advocacy.

"The next generation is feeling the same anxieties we all face, including the higher cost of groceries, gas, health care, and education," Sen. Kim said. "I admire their advocacy and will continue to fight for them and all New Jerseyans."

We were also inspired by messages from two other members of Congress: Senator Chris Van Hollen (MD) and Representative Pramila Jayapal (WA-07).

Accepting FCNL's annual Justice Award, Senator Van Hollen thanked everyone for being a part of a "very important community" of people speaking up in defense of peace and justice—both at home and around the globe.

"You give me hope," Sen. Van Hollen said. "Because you are all coming together to stand up for what we believe in. These [are] core principles that we teach our children ... justice, human rights, and the quest for peace."

Sen. Van Hollen's message of gratitude and hope was echoed by Rep. Jayapal, who received our annual Edward F. Snyder Award for National Legislative Leadership in Advancing Disarmament and Building Peace:

"Everything you do in organizing and advocating for our shared vision of justice and humanity is so critically important. So do not be discouraged. Do not lose hope. And do not stop organizing. Together, we are on the right side of history. And we will prevail."

While there's much work for peace ahead, we saw clear signs that our advocacy made a difference in helping to halt more war funding.

In the weeks following Friends Changemaker Weekend, leaders in Congress abandoned plans to vote on billions more to continue the war, with some Republicans joining a strong majority of Democrats in voicing their opposition.

"Could this be a turning point for Congress to rethink how it spends our taxpayer dollars and finally put people over the Pentagon?" FCNL's Bridget Moix asked in her article in Religion News Service. "It can be if we make it so."

▼ Sen. Chris Van Hollen (MD) offers remarks after being honored with the Justice Award.



Photo by DAG Photo/FCNL

Finding Joy in Advocacy and Community

These are difficult times. But as Friends Changemaker Weekend showed us, we can find hope and joy in coming together in community to act for peace and justice.

Before lobbying our members of Congress, we gathered for three days of learning and community-building, hearing from policy experts and making art and music together. Thank you to everyone who helped make Friends Changemaker Weekend such a rewarding and powerful experience.

One of the highlights was a song written and performed during the event. Set to the tune of “For What It’s Worth” by Buffalo Springfield, this was the catchy chorus:

Nothing for the Iran war
Para la guerra, nada más
Nothing for the Iran war
Don't you spend a penny more! 🇺🇸

Bryan Bowman is FCNL's social media and communications strategist.

During FCW, we asked:
If you could take funding
from war to address one
other issue, what would it be?

PEACEBUILDING
HEALTHCARE
RENEWABLE ENERGY 
HUMANITARIAN AID
LOCAL COMMUNITIES
FOOD ASSISTANCE
INFRASTRUCTURE 



▲ Advocates at Friends Changemaker Weekend display signs and sing their original composition. Photo by DAG Photo/FCNL.

Reckless Exits and Divine Light

Witnessing Occupation in Minnesota

By Katie Breslin

If I want to understand what is happening in my neighborhood right now during the ICE invasion of Minnesota, I go to my local gas station.

The owner has become an unwilling chronicler of this surge in enforcement. For weeks, he has watched swarms of unmarked agents descend on his lot. I saw the chaos myself when a fleet of unmarked vehicles came barreling out of the station—no sirens, just visible weapons and panic.

A neighbor pulling in for gas was nearly crushed when the agents turned the wrong way in their haste to leave. He wasn't running; he was simply in their path.

Outside, the abandoned cars still sat in his lot, holding the absence of the people who had been taken.

As a Quaker, my faith is rooted in the conviction that there is “that of God” in everyone. When I see agents surrounding cars based solely on skin color, I see a system choosing to ignore the Divine Light standing right in front of them.

Most of Minnesota is living under a lawless “Metro Surge” and nowhere is safe. I witnessed this terror firsthand recently when I received a frantic alert that an abduction was in process. I ran to a nearby street, but I arrived only in time to see the dust settling as ICE drove away with a mother, her two children, and their dog on their way to school. I stood with neighbors as we desperately tried to figure out how to return their abandoned car to a house that was suddenly, tragically missing its heart.

On the ground, we know this is not only a crisis of safety but a crisis of the spirit—one that pulled me back into the world of faith-based organizing. I joined hundreds of others to answer a call from MARCH (Multifaith Antiracism, Change and Healing), a Minneapolis-based coalition of multiracial clergy. Quakers in Minneapolis and across the country have been showing up to that call.

We walked downtown in negative-degree weather to tell ICE to get out. At one point, my glasses fogged completely, leaving me marching blindly into the freeze. Still, I felt safe—held by the knowledge that I was surrounded by people who had my back.

Most Quakers, myself included, are in positions of relative privilege in this moment. That reality comes with responsibility. It calls us to show up relentlessly: at pray-ins and vigils, in letters and calls to Congress, in lobby visits, and in public witness that refuses to look away. This is not separate from the community solidarity I have learned from Minneapolis—it is an extension of it.

Faith, like community, is not a passive noun but an active discipline, practiced in how we place our bodies, our voices, and our resources in service of our neighbors. 

*Abridged from the original, posted February 12, 2026, on fcnl.org.
Katie Breslin is former FCNL
young adult program manager.*



READ ONLINE

From Survival to Advocacy

Why the U.S. Must Continue to Protect Rohingya Refugees

By Yasin Arfat



READ ONLINE

I am a Rohingya survivor of genocide.

I was born into a community that the Myanmar military tried to erase through mass killings, sexual violence, village burnings, and forced displacement.

Like so many Rohingya, I did not leave my home because I wanted to. I left because survival demanded it.

Today, I write this from the United States—a country that gave me the chance not only to live in safety, but to dream again. The United States offered me refuge when my own country denied my existence. It gave me access to education and the possibility of a future shaped by dignity rather than fear. For that, I carry deep gratitude.

Resettlement changed my life. It allowed me to heal, to learn, and eventually to give back—not only to the country that welcomed me, but to the community I come from. The United States did not just save my life; it gave me a platform to use my voice.

Today, I serve as a Diaspora Organizer with FCNL, advocating for refugee protection and human rights. I have met with policymakers and elected officials to share my story and to speak on behalf of Rohingya people who cannot be in those rooms themselves. Each meeting is a reminder that policy decisions made in Washington are not abstract—they determine whether families are reunited, whether children grow up safe, and whether survivors of genocide are given a chance to rebuild their lives.

Welcoming Rohingya refugees is not only a humanitarian act, it reflects America's values and strengthens the nation itself. Refugees contribute economically, culturally, and civically. I am living proof of what becomes possible when protection is paired with opportunity.

Right now, immigration enforcement in the United States is threatening my community after welcoming us. There are new policies which would open refugees up to arbitrary and unjust arrest. A blind Rohingya man who survived immense suffering was arrested by Border Patrols and then abandoned to wander the streets until he died. Refugees are being brutalized in what should be a safe country.

My journey from surviving genocide to advocating in the halls of power was only possible because the United States chose to care. At a moment when refugees are too often politicized and dehumanized, I request this country to continue leading with compassion and courage.

I am grateful for the chance I am given. Now, I advocate so others may have the same. 

*Abridged from the original, posted March 24, 2026 on fcnl.org.
Yasin Arfat is an FCNL diaspora organizer.*

At 250, Congress Must Act to Protect Our Fundamental Freedoms

By Bridget Moix

This should be a year for celebrating the core values of democracy and freedom for which generations of Americans have struggled and for which we continue to strive.

Unfortunately, 250 years after the founding of this country, some of our most fundamental freedoms are at risk. It is time Congress acts to protect them.

In January 2025, the Trump administration ended a long-standing bipartisan policy that protected civil liberties and access to vital services at what are known as “sensitive locations.” This rollback has led to unconscionable immigration arrests at or near schools, hospitals, and courthouses, even places of worship.

These are places where our families and communities practice the most basic activities of civic life and care for one another, where our freedoms should be treated especially carefully and with respect.

How can we honor the 250th birthday of our country while our families and communities live in fear, unable to practice the most basic activities that life in the U.S. used to promise?

This is not a partisan issue; it’s fundamentally an American value. Despite all the chaos we’ve witnessed, Congress still has the power to rein in indiscriminate enforcement, protect civil liberties, and reprioritize safety in our communities. Lawmakers must act to reinstitute the checks and balances our democracy has provided for 250 years. 

Abridged from the original, posted on March 24, 2026, on Religion News Service. Bridget Moix is FCNL general secretary.



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Friends Committee on National Legislation

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Cover Photo:

Davis Ricker and Bishop Julius C. Trimble share their inspirations for advocacy at the first-ever Friends Changemaker Weekend in April. Photo by Wesley Pinkham/FCNL.



FCNL Annual Meeting

Deep Roots, Bold Action

at Friends Meeting of Washington (DC) and Online

[FCNL.org/AnnualMeeting](https://fcnl.org/AnnualMeeting) November 12–14, 2026

FCNL clerk Kitty Ufford-Chase and general secretary Bridget Moix at last year's Annual Meeting. Photo by DAG Photo/FCNL.



Friends Committee
on National Legislation
Lobbying with Quakers

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