Friends Committee on National Legislation
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People Over the Pentagon

By Greg Williams

"A nation that neglects its sick, its hungry, its unhoused, and its children, while funneling all the resources to fix those problems into an unaccountable military apparatus is fundamentally insecure."

Allen Hester,
Legislative Representative for Nuclear Disarmament and Pentagon Spending at FCNL.

This year is different. We usually know what to expect. After the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), the annual military policy bill, works through the powerful armed services committees in the House and the Senate, it faces a 'vote-a-rama' of amendments on everything from culture war issues to foreign military assistance.

When those are all resolved, it goes for a vote and, every year, passes with strong bipartisan majorities. This process has, for the most part, run like a well-oiled machine, with the Pentagon budget growing more massive with each passing year.

But this year, when the bill advanced from committees, the process stalled. It only passed with a razor thin margin in the House (216-212), after failing to pass earlier. It was voted down in the Senate and, as



▲ At a rally, a protester displays a sign calling on Congress to tame the "Pentagon budget monster."

of this writing, faces an uncertain road to passage.

As FCNL's Allen Hester has put it, "For the first time in generations, the Pentagon spending machine is not running on autopilot."

Why? **People power.**

"You get what you pay for. If you fund fear and force, you get devastation. But by investing in programs that make our communities and world safe, healthy and resilient, Congress can help turn the tide from escalating war to enduring peace."

This NDAA would authorize the largest-ever Pentagon budget at $1.15 trillion. This comes while the Trump administration started an unpopular, illegal, and immoral war with Iran, and while families at home face an affordability crisis amid devastating cuts to healthcare, food assistance, and other vital programs.

When this war strained the resources of the U.S. military, they sounded the alarm and asked for even more cash on top of an already-ridiculous and bloated Pentagon budget.

The peace movement responded overwhelmingly, calling for an end to the war and for Congress to reject more funding for it.

Now, the voices of the people are being heard. Lawmakers are asking hard questions, asserting Congress's war powers, and increasingly, rejecting a blank check for unauthorized, disastrous war.

Since the NDAA impacts so many issues of peace and justice, many of the lobbyists on our team work on it, coordinated by Allen Hester: from Jeffrey Jordan concerned with the ecological impact of Pentagon spending to Ursala Knudsen-Latta working on landmine and cluster munition policy.

Even those who don't work on issues addressed in the bill find that the Pentagon budget takes resources that are needed in many other programs of the federal government. This is a skeleton key which unlocks so much of what is at the core of the world we seek.

Every year, we work to limit Pentagon spending and rein in U.S. militarism, and we have had some real wins. Just last year, the NDAA

included an amendment that finally repealed one of the major authorizations of the never-ending post-9/11 wars: the 2002 Iraq War Authorization for Use of Military Force.

While we've helped build significant, bipartisan opposition to run-away Pentagon spending in Congress, relatively few lawmakers have been willing to challenge the topline Pentagon budget. **Until now.**

With the bill stalled this summer, FCNL's network and our coalition worked tirelessly to help build on this momentum.

Congress went home for the August recess at a vital time. This is a month-long period when they are home listening to constituents.

We organized a powerful campaign to make sure that while they are home they heard from advocates for peace demanding: Not a Penny More for War!

The response amazed FCNL staff. Hundreds of people raised their hands and offered to be connected with Advocacy Teams, activated their communities, and let us know about lobby visits they had already planned with their members of Congress.

The "War is Not the Answer" message continues to inspire and stickers bearing that message are flying across the country. From organizing their retirement communities to using their experience as veterans, people of faith and conscience are refusing to let another potential forever war get out of control.

By the time you receive this newsletter, the NDAA may have passed, with too much money going to weapons and war, or the struggle may be continuing – go to **fcnl.org/NDAA** to learn the latest.

But regardless of the outcome of this bill, our hope lies in building our movement of advocates across the country and their relationships with members of Congress. That will build momentum and change the direction of our policy to build true peace and security.

Our guiding principles don't change year after year. When we turn to FCNL's statement of legislative policy, "The World We Seek," we see: "Militarization has permeated our society, skewing our national budget toward support for the military and its attendant industries and forcing our local economies increasingly to depend on them. Although national security is widely perceived to depend on military strength, more weapons do not provide more security." (I.2.1)

This year shows that this message is starting to resonate. We know the broader public already agrees with it, but now this is starting to resound in Congress.

As FCNL's general secretary, Bridget Moix, put it in an RNS column, "You get what you pay for. If you fund fear and force, you get devastation. But by investing in programs that make our communities and world safe, healthy and resilient, Congress can help turn the tide from escalating war to enduring peace."

Greg Williams is FCNL's Sr. Director of Communications.

▼ At a rally for a rightsized Pentagon budget, someone chalked the road to say: "Money for the poor, not for war!"



Photo by Eric Bond/FCNL

Faith Leaders Organizing for Peace and Justice

Q+A with Sr. Advocacy Teams Manager Tim Heishman

Advocacy Teams have been busy this year organizing with faith leaders in their communities. These trusted moral voices can open doors for the teams and show the desire of the community to act. In August, they focused their lobbying on peace and justice issues that move their community and are active in Congress.

Why are faith leaders effective voices for peace?

Members of Congress and their staff see faith leaders as trusted moral leaders who bring important perspectives to key issues. Their moral and prophetic voices make them particularly powerful messengers for peace. Faith communities also have a long history of leading movements for social change, giving their witness historical weight.

"I hope Advocacy Teams develop deeper relationships in their communities, particularly with faith leaders, and build a larger, more diverse, and stronger constituency for peace."

How are Advocacy Teams organizing faith leaders?

Advocacy Teams are building relationships with faith leaders through community networking, conversations at houses of worship, and interfaith and community organizations. Our primary approach has been inviting faith leaders to join sign-on letters to members of Congress. These invitations build relationships and open the door to deeper collaboration, including lobbying.

What do you hope develops from this organizing?

I hope Advocacy Teams develop deeper relationships in their communities, particularly with faith leaders and other community leaders, and build a larger, more diverse, and stronger constituency for peace. It has been especially rewarding to watch Advocacy Team members develop new organizing skills and realize they can have greater impact by bringing more people into the work.

Tim Heishman is FCNL's Sr. Advocacy Teams Manager.



▲ Faith leaders in Indiana gathered to lobby their members of Congress on issues of peace and justice. Photo by Alicia McBride/FCNL.

FROM THE WEB

One Year Later, People of Faith Should Reckon with Trump's "Big Beautiful Bill"

By Bridget Moix



▲ General Secretary Bridget Moix speaks at an interfaith vigil calling for a just federal budget. Photo by Jenn Loving/FCNL.

In her Religion News Service opinion piece One Year Later, People of Faith Should Reckon with Trump's 'Big Beautiful Bill', FCNL General Secretary Bridget Moix shows how the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, signed by President Donald Trump in 2025, has deepened inequality, increased hardship for vulnerable people, and represents a moral failure for our country.

As a Quaker, Bridget says, "I have been taught to assess legislation with simple questions: What does this policy do to the dignity of every person? Will this law strengthen the common good?" Bridget goes on: "By these measures, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act has failed."

The law delivered tax benefits to wealthy individuals and corporations, funded through cuts to programs that help people. What's more, the legislation was responsible for "dramatically expanding war-like immigration enforcement."

"The law included the largest cut to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program in U.S. history," Bridget notes. Data from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities shows that millions have lost access to food benefits because of stricter eligibility rules and administrative barriers.

On health care, Bridget points to Congressional Budget Office projections that about 15 million Americans will lose insurance coverage due to Medicaid and Affordable Care Act changes. "Losing coverage means delaying cancer screenings, prenatal care, mental health treatment, addiction services and routine medical care until health problems become emergencies and emergencies become tragedies," says Bridget.

The anniversary of this law offers an opportunity for moral reckoning. "These policy choices are not merely budget decisions. They reveal our national priorities."

Abridged from the original, posted on July 27, 2026, on Religion News Service. Bridget Moix serves as FCNL general secretary.

READ ONLINE

Working with Refugees Has Stretched Our Hearts

By Patricia McBee

Patricia McBee of Newtown Friends Meeting (PA) works with the Bucks County Interfaith Coalition for Refugee Resettlement, which assists refugee families as they build their new lives in America. Begun in 2016 in response to the growing anti-Muslim rhetoric in presidential candidate Donald Trump's campaign, the effort brought together people from religious traditions including Jews, Muslims, Christians, and Quakers, who worked together in a shared mission of welcome and support.

The Coalition's first major resettlement efforts were sponsoring two Syrian families who were fleeing war – one family arrived just 10 days before the Trump administration's Muslim ban. "We hurried to find an apartment, and asked our congregations for funds, furniture, housewares, linens, and ethnically appropriate foods," Patricia reflects. Both families ultimately became U.S. citizens. She notes that, "a little initial assistance helps newcomers become stable, contributing members of their communities." In addition, Patricia continues, "With each new arrival, new volunteers and donors stepped up – we now had over 200!"

Following the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021 and the Taliban's return to power, "Afghan allies were being evacuated and our supporters urged us to start again—raise money, find and furnish an apartment, and provide a new home for those seeking safety," Patricia notes. The coalition helped resettle Afghan families who had worked with the U.S. in Afghanistan and arrived through legal immigration pathways. More Afghan families were welcomed in 2025, says Patricia, including "a mother with her three little children, who came without her husband whose U.S. visa has been repeatedly delayed without explanation."

Despite their legal immigrant status, many of these refugee families continue to feel insecure in their new country, writes Patricia. "With the current administration's policies, they carry a degree of fear," she says. This vulnerability is heartbreaking for the refugees and troubling for their new friends in this country. As Patricia notes, "One Afghan refugee, Omar, observed he was fearful in Afghanistan, he was not fearful in Germany, and he is again fearful in the U.S."

Patricia's experience with refugee families also transformed her and other volunteers. As she came to know and befriend Muslim refugee people, she deepened her appreciation for their faith, resilience, and gratitude. Says Patricia, "we work in the hope of the Jewish adage *tikkun olam*, to heal the world. We are grateful. *Alhamdullilah*, thanks be to God." Patricia and the Bucks County Interfaith Coalition for Refugee Resettlement Coalition's work with refugees ultimately stretched hearts, strengthened community bonds, and enriched everyone involved.

Abridged from the original, posted on July 28, 2026, on fcnl.org. Patricia McBee of Newtown Friends Meeting supported the development of the Bucks County Interfaith Coalition for Refugee Resettlement which supports refugee families as they build their new lives in America.

▼ Advocates gathered in Minnesota to support immigrants and refugees. Photo by Fibonacci Blue.



READ ONLINE

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Wins for Native Communities

By Rachel Overstreet

This spring, as Congress set federal spending for Fiscal Year 2027, Native communities faced uncertainty. The President's budget proposal called for deep cuts to needed programs.

Tribal nations and Native-led organizations successfully pushed back. As a non-Native organization, we are proud to follow the lead of tribal nations and Indigenous advocates.

The House provided $3.21 billion for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) — 29% more than was enacted last year. That keeps tribal governments running, funds roads and bridges on tribal lands, supports law enforcement and courts in Native communities, and much more. The bill provides $1.55 billion for the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) — 13.3% above last year — including $304 million specifically for school construction and renovation.

This year, the House Appropriations Committee proposed $8.7 billion for the Indian Health Service (IHS) — an increase of $640 million. That supports patients who need to access specialist services. It includes more funding for environmental health and facilities.

Every dollar invested in IHS is a step toward fulfilling the federal government's trust responsibility to Native people.

The Tribal Access Program (TAP) is a lifeline for public safety in tribal communities which gives tribes access to national crime databases that they've historically been denied.

The House bill increases TAP funding by 50%. That means more tribes can connect to these critical systems, and more communities can benefit from the public safety infrastructure that other jurisdictions have taken for granted.

These wins didn't happen by accident. They are the result of years of persistent, principled advocacy by tribal nations and Native organizations.

Abridged from the original, posted on June 25, 2026, on fcnl.org. Rachel Overstreet was formerly FCNL's Legislative Representative for Native American Advocacy.



Friends Committee on National Legislation

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Advocates display a sign demanding a shift in our country's funding priorities. Photo by Wesley Pinkham/FCNL.

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