

NETWORK Connection

PEOPLE LOBBYING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE • FIRST QUARTER 2016

Fighting Poverty in 2016

Includes 2015 Voting Record


dear members

Another year has passed and once again we are reflecting on how important you are to NETWORK. Not only do you support us financially, but you advocate with your elected representatives on the Hill and in your community. We love it when we hear from a congressional office that you have been calling or writing. This is NETWORK at our best.

We are also grateful for the many ways that you share our mission by forwarding e-mails, taking action, sharing this magazine, talking about what matters most, and helping us reflect on the important issues of today. But in these turbulent times, we are called to do more.

In the last few months, the vitriol towards people who are immigrants and Muslim has been rampant in our country. We cannot stay silent in the face of such fear and distortion. I hope you will join us in our resolution to support all of God's people and creation. We must speak out against the dangerous rhetoric towards members of our global family. This means that our advocacy is needed more than ever.

Therefore, as we kick off this critical year and the 2016 presidential election year, let us resolve together to be advocates with Congress and the Administration, but also advocates with our friends and neighbors. Let us advocate with others to follow Jesus' instruction to "fear not." This is what will make us a "more perfect union" where all are part of We the People.

Yours,

 Simone Campbell, SSS
 Executive Director



**ECUMENICAL
 ADVOCACY DAYS**

April 15-18, 2016

*Lift Every Voice! –
 Racism, Class & Power*

An Election Year National Gathering and Lobby Day in our nation's capital to address solutions to issues of injustice for communities of color and immigrants, voter suppression, and economic exploitation.

Registration is now open!
<http://advocacydays.org/2016-lift-every-voice/>

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Staying Faithful in a Murky World

BY SISTER SIMONE CAMPBELL

In a Congress that was mostly deadlocked last year, we have at least one important victory to celebrate. Through persistent advocacy, dogged determination, and astute leadership, Congress found a way to pass the most significant anti-poverty legislation in decades. The big tax bill that passed makes the 2009 improvements to the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit permanent. A few months ago, I only gave it a 35 to 40% chance of passing. But we knew that it was the most important thing that the Congress could do this term to improve the situation of millions of working families. So we kept working for it.

Right after Thanksgiving, it looked like it was dead, but we kept working. On Dec. 3 a colleague told me that if it passed, it should be called the "Lazarus bill" because it had been brought back to life several times. Your letters and calls helped breathe life back into the legislation and helped to make it real. You have helped millions of families (especially their children) to live lives less strapped by abject poverty. Thank you for your tireless efforts.

But we also know that the bill is not perfect. The price for getting our provisions made permanent was having a much larger package of business tax credits made permanent also. These will come directly out of our nation's tax revenue without having any offsetting spending cuts. This is challenging because the Republican-led Congress has been saying that we don't have the money to fund programs for those living in poverty. But it appears that we have a lot of money to give away to those at the top of the economic ladder. This is wrong, but we still celebrate the achievement which provides key support to our struggling families.

This brought me to reflect on the challenging ministry that we do on Capitol

Hill and around the country. We cannot be purists. If we advocated for only our way without making compromises, then nothing would get done. Our people would languish. Children would go hungry. And the moneyed interests would have whatever they want. But how do we stay faithful to our values in such a murky world?

My reflection has brought me to know that in many ways it is our bus encounters that keep us faithful. On the bus, we met Anika in Nashville who benefited from the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit so that she was able to cobble together a down payment on a home. Anika became the first home

owner in her family after experiencing incarceration and homelessness. She helps me remember that these programs that we work for help real people make real gains.

In Indianapolis we met people who told us how the east side of town had been cut off from the downtown capital for years. People living on the east side are primarily people of color and their commute to jobs is difficult or almost impossible. Finally, federal highway funds were available to construct a bridge over the freeway. This literally bridged the racial divides and made it possible for people to get to work and to change bus routes to better serve the city. These folks help me remember that federal funding can change lives.

In Memphis we were reminded of how the voting rights act makes a difference in the lives of the disenfranchised. The Civil Rights Museum lifted up the struggle for racial justice in our nation, but also made it clear that our work is not done. Current efforts to discourage voting and to drive people away from the polls underscore the work that needs to be done to restore the voting rights act to full effect.

These stories and so many more keep me grounded in the truth that we cannot afford to wait for the perfect bill. In any policy struggle we need to set our priorities of what we want to accomplish and a ranked list of what is unacceptable. We then know what to insist on and what we can negotiate. As long as our outline is rooted in the lives and struggles of real people then we know that we are being faithful to their needs and our values. Therefore, the call for us in the ministry of advocacy is to stay rooted in the lives and needs of those around us. This is the spirituality of the incarnation that will bring life and healing to many. Thank you for being that sacrament for me.



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How Should We Fight Poverty in 2016?

Joseph Ward, NETWORK Communications Manager, interviewed U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and Robert Doar, Morgridge Fellow in Poverty Studies at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI). The perspectives from the left and right provide a framework for how policymakers intend to address poverty issues this year. These interviews were conducted separately.

Sen. Elizabeth Warren

Joseph: In 2016, what are some of the things we can do to end poverty in the U.S.?

Sen. Warren: Any attempt to end poverty has to start with a cold hard look at what's happening to America's children today. More than half of all children in public school live below the poverty line. More than 16 million children live in poor families. Three million of these children live in families certifiably on less than two dollars a day. Think about that. In one of the richest countries in the world three million children are living in families trying to survive on two dollars a day. The luck of the draw can be brutal for American children who are born to poor parents. They're more likely to have low birth weights, more cognitive delays, more behavioral problems, and worse performance in schools. These early disadvantages never go away even as children grow up. They're less likely to graduate from high school, more likely to be poor themselves as adults and more likely to be unemployed. So for me, that's the frame. That's where it all starts. America is supposed to be a land of opportunity, a place where anyone can get ahead so long as they work hard and play by the rules. But the numbers tell a very different story for poor children. It's up to us to make the promise of America real.



U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren is the senior Senator of Massachusetts.

Joseph: What will be some of your economic justice priorities? Any policy pieces you'll be pushing?

Sen. Warren: Raise the minimum wage. Raising the minimum wage will lift millions of children out of poverty and lessen the impact of poverty on millions more. I just was looking at the numbers [for] the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit [and these two tax credits] alone keep more than five million children out of poverty and lessen the impact of poverty for an additional eight million children. Those together, just those two tax credits are doing more to reduce child poverty than any other federal program. So there are two right there: raise the minimum wage; protect and expand the Earned Income Tax Credit; expand affordable health care to

children living in all states. Those three things would make a huge difference in the lives of children born into poverty. And so I'll be working on all of those. Education though is another part of the picture. Children born into poverty are crying before they ever get to first grade. We need to do more early childhood intervention to say those children have an opportunity to learn. It's also about the ability to create a robust economy, a stronger economy. And that means a willingness to invest in infrastructure, make it more attractive to build jobs here in America, that shouldn't be sent overseas. Investing in medical and scientific research. Partly because that is good for the economy of America, but partly because it gives our children a healthier start. Every one of these pieces about investing in the future creates a pathway for our poorest children... [A]n overarching theme and something we'll talk about I think a lot during the upcoming elections is who this government works for. As you call-in I'm here in Washington and the big discussion is whether to expand tax breaks for giant corporations by hundreds of billions of dollars. Some of those tax breaks make it more profitable for companies to create jobs overseas than to create those jobs here at home. And the only reason those kinds of proposals are on the table is because these corporations in this country hire armies of lobbyists and lawyers. Poor children don't have an army of lobbyists to make sure that their voices get heard here in Washington. It's our job to make sure that government works not just for the richest among us but for the least of thy brethren. It's an economic issue, but it's also a moral issue.

Joseph: How are you and other members of Congress bridging political divides on these issues?

Sen. Warren: When we speak of our world responsibilities as human beings, we talk about something larger than political identification. I am hopeful that when good people who are committed to social justice, reach out to their Senators and Representatives that together we can push this country in a direction that makes opportunity for all our children, without regard to political ideology.

Robert Doar

Joseph: You've had an opportunity to work with diverse economic leaders through the AEI-Brookings partnership. As we look ahead, what are for some of the things we can do in 2016 to help end poverty in the U.S.?

Robert: There are four important things that I think could happen. The first is that we could encourage more work among SNAP [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program] recipients. The food stamp program is a good program. It does a lot of good for a lot of Americans. It helps people reduce their exposure to very low food security and food insecurity generally. But it is a transactional program. It helps people get additional resources into their household so they can afford more groceries, but it doesn't try to help them transform their lives so that they don't need the assistance. As co-chair to the National Commission on Hunger, I spent the last 15 months going around the country talking to people and I heard from recipients who said that the SNAP program was good at getting them

an EBT card to help pay for food but not so good at helping them get a job. This needs to change. If people are employed they are far less likely to be either in poverty or suffering from food insecurity.

Second, I hope Congress passes legislation, which the president can sign, that helps our economy continue to grow and move forward. The economy is a very important part of the extent to which we are able to help Americans who are struggling. Job availability and rising levels of employment, increased wages all matter. Whether it's good investments in infrastructure (which Congress did pass a bill on highway construction and the President signed) or reduction in taxes or less regulation--any of those things that are good for the economy are also likely to be good for poor Americans.

The third is that we encourage marriage and that we encourage the formation of families prior to having children. Children just do much better when they have stable, secure, and consistent parenting from both a mother and a father and we should be honest about that with struggling Americans. We should

say to people that it's better for your child, [or] your prospective child, if you have a committed partner and most likely that happens within marriage in the United States. Two active, involved, consistent parents working together to jointly raise a child is a key ingredient to helping people escape poverty. So I hope we talk more about that, and encourage that and promote a greater cultural awareness about the importance of marriage and two parents in children's families. I should say that as a Catholic, I'm not always sure that our church does enough on this and could do more. So I hope we do.

The fourth thing is we need to help disconnected young men. They are the group in our society who are struggling the most. They are more likely to be returning from being incarcerated, be out of the labor market and I am a believer in targeted efforts to help these young men who are really having difficulty. Whether it's reentry programs or targeted programs for noncustodial parents or increased tax credits that make work or wages go further for them. Those are good things we



can do that would be good for them and for their families, and I think it will ultimately reduce poverty.

Joseph: What is the role of wages and the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit as a part of fighting poverty?

Robert: I think the Earned Income Tax Credit is enormously effective in shoring up low wages especially for single parents with children in the household. It has a significant problem in that the IRS has found that there are about 20% misapplied payments, so the error rate is too high. But the status quo of that credit is basically good. It promotes and supports work, reduces poverty and I think people agree with that across the political spectrum. If we are going to make it bigger and better, I think we

should also fix its deficiencies.

The group that is left out of the Earned Income Tax Credit are childless adults who are equally poor and their wages are equally low and they get very little wage supplement from the Earned Income Tax Credit. It would be good if we could move towards increasing that while at the same time fixing the problems of the current EITC.

Joseph: How do we bridge divides on these issues?

Robert: I think the number one way is you talk to each other and you treat each other with respect. You don't challenge the others' motivations or background. You accept people for where they are and where they're coming from and you assume good intentions on both sides. And then you try to get into

COURTESY ROBERT DOAR



Robert Doar is the Morgridge Fellow in Poverty Studies at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI). He was one of 15 experts to participate in the AEI-Brookings Working Group on Poverty and Opportunity.

the data and evidence and you talk things through. I think that's what worked when AEI collaborated with the Brookings Institution to bring together conservatives and progressives to write a report on reducing poverty and increasing opportunity, and I think it worked in the National Commission on Hunger where we also wrote a unanimous report. The key ingredient is to keep the dialogue going. It also requires a willingness to walk around in the other guy's shoes and see the world from their perspective, and a willingness to compromise. Sometimes we don't have that in Washington and I hope we can get there in the coming years because I think it will help our efforts to help low-income Americans.



Jan Valder and Barney Offerman have been loyal NETWORK members since 1982

"We are NETWORK members because Catholic social teaching has been our grounding as we have worked in our community. For us, NETWORK creates a public movement of the heart as well as the mind to practice social and distributive justice, as 'public forms of love.' It gives us a special feeling to be able to support NETWORK!"

NETWORK could not exist without our members, who are critical to our mission, both financially and as part of our community of justice-seekers. Become a NETWORK member or renew your membership with a gift, using the envelope enclosed with this issue, or online: www.networklobby.org/member.

To make your gift go even further, consider joining the NETWORK G.E.M. (Give Every Month) program. Your faithful giving provides a reliable financial base that allows us to plan strategically and makes room for new opportunities that increase the reach and impact of our mission.

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Working Together to Eliminate Child Poverty in America

BY U.S. SENATOR TAMMY BALDWIN

Last September, I had the honor of witnessing Pope Francis's address to Congress when he visited the United States. Throughout his remarks, the Pope called attention to the most vulnerable Americans: our young.

"Their problems are our problems," Pope Francis remarked. "We cannot avoid them. We need to face them together, to talk about them and to seek effective solutions rather than getting bogged down in discussions."

For millions of Americans, childhood means growing up in poverty without access to the basic needs and opportunities that everyone—especially a child—should have in our country. In my home state of Wisconsin, over 18 percent of Wisconsinites under the age of 18 spent 2014 in poverty including 21 percent of children under the age of five. Pope Francis's call to action is clear. The time is now to advance real strategies to care for America's children and eliminate child poverty.

Together with my colleagues U.S. Senators Bob Casey (D-PA) and Sherrod Brown (D-OH), I have introduced the Child Poverty Reduction Act to meet the challenge of eliminating child poverty.

This legislation would establish a national target to reduce the number of children living in poverty in America by

half in 10 years, eradicate extreme child poverty in 10 years, and eliminate child poverty overall in 20 years.

Our legislation institutes a process to identify the most effective interven-

monitoring progress toward the target at the federal and state levels.

Creating a national target to cut child poverty like this is not unprecedented—in fact, it has already been

proven to work. In 1999, the United Kingdom established a national child poverty target. The UK's Child Poverty Target, and resulting policy changes, cut the country's child poverty rate by 50 percent during the effort's first decade. This remarkable success starkly contrasts with what has happened in the United States during that same period—a more than 20 percent increase in child poverty between 2000 and 2013.

Government cannot address child poverty alone. It is going to take a national commitment from both the public and private sector to act and end this crisis. Eliminating child poverty in the next

twenty years is a moral and just cause around which we must all rally in order to move our nation forward.

I look forward to working with NETWORK this year and every other American determined to meet this challenge head-on and improve the lives of millions of American children who deserve hope, opportunity, and dreams achieved.



U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin is the junior senator of Wisconsin.

COURTESY OFFICE OF SEN. TAMMY BALDWIN



The Architect of the Capitol has begun the final phase of the Dome Restoration Project.

ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL

Voting Record for the 114th Congress First Session

BY SISTER MARGE CLARK, NETWORK LOBBYIST

It seems that every year ends in a mix of wins and losses when considering the accomplishments of the House and the Senate. In 2015, the mix was more positive than we had anticipated. Several bills sent to the President for his signature evidenced the desire of members of Congress to work together and bridge divides, such as the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act, Bipartisan Budget Act, Iran Nuclear Agreement Review, and Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act. While others only passed one chamber, such as the Federal Employee Antidiscrimination Act and the Homes for Heroes Act, we still see evidence of a willingness to come together to find policy solutions for complex problems.

As usual, Congress pushed difficult decisions on taxes and funding of the government to the last possible moment. In weeks prior to the release, we heard little about the negotiations, particularly on the funding bill, as staff and members worked behind closed doors. It is to their advantage to keep it quiet, as it limits the time others have to raise opposition. We heard speculation that hundreds of “poison pill” riders were proposed, which would have affected immigrants, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), the environment, Syrian refugees, and more. Despite the closed-door negotiations, we did our best to lobby against these harmful provisions to insure the legislation worked for the 100%.

Just before midnight, two days before the temporary continuing resolution expired, the tax and funding bills were re-

leased to the House and the Senate. The deadline forced an additional short term continuing resolution to provide time for floor work and bringing each bill to a vote. NETWORK is pleased with both bills. Certainly, the budget is far from what we would want it to be, but it is equally as far from how damaging it might have been. Attention was given to the needs of those at the margins through increased funding to human needs programs above the sequester level. In addition, almost all the poison pill riders vanished.

NETWORK’s major concern in the tax extender bill was the permanence of the improvements to the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and to the Child Tax Credit (CTC), which were set to expire in a very uncertain 2017. We were pleased this, and several other credits to help working families, were included for permanency. Months earlier, the committee had only planned to include tax breaks for businesses. The advocacy of NETWORK, our members, friends, and partners helped to change hearts and minds, bringing the consideration of the common good to this bill.

The voting record charts will give you a sense of the values and decisions of Senators and Representatives—and where they stand in relation to the issues you, and we, have worked on throughout this year.

With hope, we look forward to 2016, that even in a Presidential election year, legislation will pass. The criminal

justice reform bill is ready and has momentum, but given the shortened calendar, it must move quickly. Bills related to family and personal medical leave, and those requiring adaptations for women who are pregnant or with a young infant, may also be discussed. Focused on their campaigns, members will use legislation and votes for messaging purposes.

This might not result in ideas becoming law, but we hope this year will build the groundwork for a strong transition to the next Congress and some progress toward justice for those living on the margins. Congress needs to continue hearing your voice. We saw some positive legislation last year. Help us be able to say the same a year from now.

Senate Voting Record 2015

1. Immigration Rule of Law Act of 2015 • Vote #63 (S. 534)

NETWORK opposed this bill, which prohibits funds from being used to carry out certain executive actions related to immigration, including DACA and DAPA.

Cloture was not invoked, disallowing further consideration 57–42 (1 not voting), February 27, 2015

2. Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 • Vote #144 (H.R. 2)

NETWORK supported this bill. The two-year reauthorization will improve children’s healthcare through providing child-focused health insurance that covers all of their medical needs.

Passed 92–8, April 14, 2015

Became law April 16, 2015

3. The Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act of 2015 • Vote #219 (Amendment to H.R. 2146)

(Official Bill Title: To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow Federal law enforcement officers, firefighters, and air traffic controllers to make penalty-free withdrawals from governmental plans after age 50, and for other purposes)

NETWORK opposed this bill. The law provides an expedited legislative procedure for the consideration and approval of trade agreements known as “fast track.” Under the rule, a trade agreement cannot be amended, must receive a vote in both houses, cannot be filibustered in the Senate, and is passed by a simple majority rather than the 2/3rd standard (Article 2, Section 2) required for treaties.

Passed 60–38 (2 not voting), June 24, 2015

Became law June 29, 2015

4. To repeal the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010 entirely • Vote #253 (S. Amdt. 2328 to S. Amdt. 2327 to S. Amdt. 2266 to H.R. 22)

NETWORK opposed this amendment, and all other measures that attempted to repeal or dismantle the Affordable Care Act.

Cloture was not invoked, disallowing further consideration 49–43 (8 not voting), July 26, 2015

5. National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016 • Vote #277 (H.R. 1735)

NETWORK opposed this bill, which would have broken parity by significantly increasing the amount of money the Pentagon receives through the unmonitored Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) fund. A significant increase to the OCO was obtained through the Defense Appropriations bill, but half the increase in funding went to Foreign Operations, therefore not breaking the parity principle.

Agreed to 70–27 (3 not voting), October 7, 2015

Vetoed October 22, 2015

6. Stop Sanctuary Policies and Protect Americans Act • Vote #280 (S. 2146)

NETWORK opposed this bill, which would penalize hundreds of cities and counties for adopting policies that work to restore community trust with police by limiting police involvement in immigration enforcement. The legislation would deny these jurisdictions federal funding for housing and create mandatory minimums and increase the maximum penalty for undocumented immigrants.

Cloture was not invoked, disallowing further consideration

54–45 (1 not voting), October 20, 2015

7. Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 • Vote #294 (H.R. 1314)

NETWORK supported this budget agreement, which was a compromise that raised revenue and budget caps. Furthermore, the budget caps were raised equally between defense and nondefense spending. While the deal did not achieve all of NETWORK’s objectives, it was a better option for our nation than a budget that adheres to sequester caps.

Passed 64–35 (1 not voting), October 30, 2015

Became law November 2, 2015

8. Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016 • Vote #339 (H.R. 2029)

NETWORK supported this bill, which combined the tax and budget legislation passed as separate bills in the House (House Voting Record #10 and #11). The tax portion of the bill made permanent the 2009 expansions to the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit. The deal also provided increased funding for human needs programs with amounts above the sequester level.

Passed 65–33 (2 not voting), December 18, 2015

Became law December 18, 2015

There were no changes in the Senate during this Session.

114th CONGRESS FIRST SESSION

HOW THEY VOTED IN THE HOUSE

Table with columns for legislative bills (Save American Workers 2015, Homeland Security, etc.) and rows for legislators from Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, etc.

Key to votes:

- Voted with NETWORK +
Voted against NETWORK -
Did not vote o
Inactive/not in office I

CALIFORNIA, continued

Table with columns for legislative bills and rows for California legislators (Karen Bass, Linda Sanchez, Ed Royce, etc.).

114th CONGRESS FIRST SESSION

HOW THEY VOTED IN THE HOUSE

Table with columns for legislative bills and rows for legislators from Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, etc.

Key to votes:

- Voted with NETWORK +
Voted against NETWORK -
Did not vote o
Inactive/not in office I

KENTUCKY

Table with columns for legislative bills and rows for Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota legislators.

Percentage with asterisk () signifies that legislator did not vote on all relevant bills.

Percentage with asterisk () signifies that legislator did not vote on all relevant bills.

114th CONGRESS FIRST SESSION HOW THEY VOTED IN THE HOUSE

Table with columns for legislative bills (1-11) and percentage of votes cast with NETWORK. Rows are organized by state: MISSISSIPPI, MISSOURI, MONTANA, NEBRASKA, NEVADA, NEW HAMPSHIRE, NEW JERSEY, NEW MEXICO, NEW YORK.

Key to votes: Voted with NETWORK +, Voted against NETWORK -, Did not vote o, Inactive/not in office l

Table with columns for legislative bills (1-11) and percentage of votes cast with NETWORK. Rows are organized by state: NEW YORK, NORTH CAROLINA, NORTH DAKOTA, OHIO, OKLAHOMA, OREGON.

Percentage with asterisk () signifies that legislator did not vote on all relevant bills.

114th CONGRESS FIRST SESSION HOW THEY VOTED IN THE HOUSE

Table with columns for legislative bills (1-11) and percentage of votes cast with NETWORK. Rows are organized by state: PENNSYLVANIA, RHODE ISLAND, SOUTH CAROLINA, SOUTH DAKOTA, TENNESSEE, TEXAS.

Key to votes: Voted with NETWORK +, Voted against NETWORK -, Did not vote o, Inactive/not in office l

Table with columns for legislative bills (1-11) and percentage of votes cast with NETWORK. Rows are organized by state: TEXAS, UTAH, VERMONT, VIRGINIA, WASHINGTON, WEST VIRGINIA, WISCONSIN, WYOMING.

Percentage with asterisk () signifies that legislator did not vote on all relevant bills.

Bridging Divides

Despite a tumultuous year of politicking on Capitol Hill, we saw several additional instances where Congress worked across the aisle to tackle important social issues.

1. Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act of 2015 (H.R. 1191)

NETWORK applauds this compromise bill, which ensures that Iran's nuclear activities will not constitute an unreasonable defense and security risk, and ensures that Iran's permitted nuclear activities won't be used to further any nuclear-related military or nuclear explosive purpose including any related research.

Passed Senate 98-1 (1 not voting),

May 7, 2015, Vote #174

Passed House 400-25 (7 not voting),

May 14, 2015, Vote # 226

Became Law May 22, 2015

2. Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015 (S. 178)

NETWORK applauds Congress for working together to pass this act, which aims to end sex trafficking crimes and provides funding for victims of trafficking.

Passed Senate 99-0 (1 not voting),

April 22, 2015, Vote #163

Passed House 420-3 (9 not voting),

May 19, 2015, Vote #244

Became law May 29, 2015

3. Federal Employee Anti-discrimination Act (H.R. 1557)

NETWORK applauds the House of Representatives for coming together to pass this act, which would expand disclosure and create accountability regarding acts of discrimination.

Passed House 403-0 (30 not voting),

July 21, 2015, Vote #448

4. Homes for Heroes Act of 2015 (H.R. 251)

NETWORK applauds the House of Representatives for working together to create a plan to end veteran homelessness.

Passed House 412-1 (20 not voting),

July 14, 2015, Vote #435

5. Portman Amendment No. 349 to S.Con.Res 11

NETWORK applauds the Senate for agreeing to an amendment which would establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund to lower the costs of raising medically complex children in Medicaid.

Agreed to by Senate 96-0 (4 not

voting), March 24, 2015, Vote #80

An Open Letter to Our Members from the NETWORK and NETWORK Education Boards of Directors

January, 2016

Dear Members,

Marge Piercy in her poem "To Be of Use" acclaims her favorite kind of people:

I love people who harness themselves, an ox to a heavy cart,
who pull like water buffalo, with massive patience,
who strain in the mud and the muck to move things forward,
who do what has to be done, again and again.

Most of us, perhaps, would hope for comparisons to animals more majestic or elegant than oxen or water buffalo. Fortunately, since its beginnings in 1971, NETWORK has been blessed with Board members who are dedicated to moving things forward and to doing what has to be done again and again. The current boards of our organizations—the 501(c)(3) NETWORK Education Program and the 501(c)(4) NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby—build on that tradition of imagination, commitment, and creativity.

One of the strengths of NETWORK has been its ability to respond nimbly to changing and sometimes challenging circumstances in the world and in the church. We continue as a Board our ongoing process of adapting our structures and procedures in ways that make our organizations more faithful to our mission and more able to achieve it. We have recently completed a major revision of our bylaws to more accurately reflect our current reality. We have a number of board committees that meet monthly by conference call in order to tend the implementation of the directions we set at our biannual face to face meetings.

We have also recently established a system for an orderly cycling of members on and off the boards to ensure that we maintain the right balance between experience and new energy and perspective. Toward the end of 2016 we will begin again the discernment process for new members for our boards. You might want to begin reflecting whether you or someone you know might be sensing a call to serve on one of our boards.

Truly the work of advocating for a more just, peaceful and verdant world requires the "massive patience" that Piercy mentions. Let's continue to support and pray for one another as NETWORK and NETWORK Education Program work, "to move things forward...to do what has to be done, again and again."

Patricia Mejia, Board Chair, NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
Dean Manternach, Board Chair, NETWORK Education Program