



# NETWORK CONNECTION

SECOND QUARTER 2024

**Inside This Issue**  
NETWORK's 2023 Annual Report  
2024 Election Resources



*A Future for Everyone*

*Grounded in Gospel values and the Catholic social justice tradition, NETWORK transforms our society by shaping federal policies that achieve racial, economic, and social justice; serve the common good; and honor the dignity of all.*

**NETWORK LOBBY FOR CATHOLIC SOCIAL JUSTICE**

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Alice Gerdeman, CDP  
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Ivonne Ramirez, who was honored as one of NETWORK's inaugural Social Poets in 2022, is a DACA recipient who has lived in St. Louis since she migrated with her family to the U.S. when she was 8. In an election year, she understands with exceptional clarity how millions of people in the U.S. are excluded from participation in the political process because of their immigration status. Photo: Lisa Johnston, courtesy of St. Louis Review

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# A Future for Freedom

*We Must Never Stop Dreaming of a Better World*

It's usually dangerous to look back on previous eras of history as somehow better. Nostalgia too often masks racism and other egregious injustices more widely accepted in times past. However, one positive hallmark of some recent past decades is people's capacity to dream.

Past generations had a lot to say about the American dream; they embraced the concept of all people having the ability within their grasp to make the life they wanted for themselves. In the fight against slavery, Jim Crow, and second-class citizenship, most Black Americans embraced Dr. King's dream of the Beloved Community where all are free and equal. Dreams push us toward action, because they imbue the lives of those who have them with hope.

We all want to live lives of hope, lives oriented toward having what we need to flourish and find fulfillment. The word for that is freedom, true freedom.

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**Catholic Social Teaching talks a great deal about freedom. It really matters. If a person lacks freedom, then they do not have what they need to make a true moral choice, including the choice to live into the potential and the dream that God has for every one of us to thrive, no exceptions!**

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Unfortunately, due to circumstances beyond their control, today's younger generations do not feel the hope to dream. Millennials and Gen Zers have had their adulthoods defined by financial crises, spiraling economic inequality, and an unrelenting experience of being priced out of American success and the freedoms that only democracy conveys, ones that their parents and grandparents took for granted. This is no accident. This is the result of 40 years of deliberate public policy choices that divested from families and communities and directed greater and greater wealth into the hands of fewer and fewer extremely rich individuals.



Joan F. Neal is NETWORK's Deputy Executive Director and Chief Equity Officer.

Pope Francis has described this phenomenon as young people feeling "crushed by the present," unable to dream of a better future. Young people without hope should be a warning to us all that our ability to experience or exercise freedom is in danger. When people lose faith in a system's ability to deliver for them, the system is in jeopardy. Is it any surprise then that the world has witnessed a global decline in democracy for the past 17 years?

We cannot afford for freedom to be relegated to the history books as a curious anomaly of the late second millennium. No, it is in the best interest of all people on the planet for there to be a future for freedom. For a picture of what the alternative offers, we can look to a country like Russia where the corrupt rule of a few oligarchs violently suppresses its opposition, leaves its own people without hope, and brutally attacks the freedom of its neighbor, Ukraine. But we can also look to the oppressive structures we permit in our own politics — such as inaction on immigration reform or refusing to make the tax code more equitable — that also robs people of freedom and their future.

Catholic Social Teaching talks a great deal about freedom. It really matters. If a person lacks freedom, then they do not have what they need to make a true moral choice, including the choice to live into the potential and the dream that God has for every one of us to thrive, no exceptions!

At NETWORK, we see the brokenness of our public policies as structures of sin, that destroy people's freedom and the common good. That is why, this year, NETWORK is focusing our election priorities on six freedoms: Freedom to be Healthy; Freedom to Care for Ourselves and Our Families; Freedom to Live on a Healthy Planet; Freedom from Harm; Freedom to Participate in a Vibrant Democracy; and Freedom to Live in a Welcoming Country that Values Dignity and Human Rights. You can read more about these later in this issue of Connection. Whether it's health care, immigration, climate change, or one's economic situation, we see this year in terms of the human freedoms at stake. We must ensure that these freedoms are revered and more deeply enshrined in our politics and our public policies, so that future generations experience the freedom to dream. 

## Notable Quotables

What justice-seekers have been saying this quarter

"The system works for a few people at the expense of the many. It's up to us — the many — to come together to change the system."

—Sister Emily TeKolste, SP, NETWORK Grassroots Mobilization Coordinator, in *Global Sisters Report*, Feb. 2

"Lost in the emphasis on priests blessing same-sex couples was how much same-sex couples have blessed the church. They have certainly blessed me."

—Fr. James Martin, SJ in *Outreach* in response to 'Fiducia supplicans', Jan. 3

"NETWORK continues to advocate for those pushed to the margins by unjust systems and structures while providing a space for Catholics (but not just Catholics) dedicated to the Gospel message to live out their faith within a committed community."

—Sr. Mara D. Rutten, Ph.D. in her new book, *Called to Action: NETWORK's 50 Years of Political Ministry*

"We will not surrender the identity of our borderlands, a place which chooses compassion over indifference, human fraternity over division, and radical hope and evangelical love over hatred and exclusion."

—Bishop Mark Seitz of the Diocese of El Paso, Feb. 22

"When people of faith talk about freedom, that's how major change-making occurs in this country. ... We will act together, in community, as we make truly fate-filled decisions later this year."

—Mary J. Novak, NETWORK Executive Director, at the NETWORK 2024 Election Preview webinar, Feb. 21

"With limited access to food, water, shelter, electricity, and medical care, those on the ground in Gaza need our support now. Time is of the essence."

—Faith leaders, including NETWORK, in a joint appeal to House Speaker Mike Johnson, Feb. 16

"I find it obscene that it is considered a compromise to give billions of dollars in tax breaks to wealthy corporations while doling out pennies by comparison to struggling American families... There is still so much to do to truly expand the Child Tax Credit."

—Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman on the House passage of the Tax Relief for American Families and Workers Act of 2024, Jan 31.

"Today too, the cry of so many of our oppressed brothers and sisters rises to heaven. Let us ask ourselves: Do we hear that cry? Does it trouble us? Does it move us?"

—Pope Francis, 2024 Message for Lent, Feb. 1



Ivonne Ramirez speaks about her experiences as a child immigrant and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program participant during Mass at Mary Mother of the Church Parish in St. Louis. “A lot of Americans know at least one, if not many, DACA recipients and immigrants,” she says. Photo: Sid Hastings

## Dreams of Inclusion

### *Inaction by Congress Costs DACA Recipients the Ability to Participate Fully in a Democracy They Help Make Flourish*

BY SYDNEY CLARK

Ivonne Ramirez was 8 when her family migrated to the U.S. from Mexico City. They arrived in St. Louis, Missouri, where her father and a sibling had been living for about a year.

“It took seven days to get to St. Louis,” Ramirez says. “I was mostly walking to cross the border. It took a lot out of me.”

Her father, a police officer, left Mexico due to safety concerns after raiding a money-laundering operation inside a bar. He was only able to bring one of his children. Ramirez journeyed with her mother and three other siblings.

“I was sleep-deprived, and people kept telling me, ‘If you keep going, you’re gonna see your dad,’” she says. “Not seeing my father for a year felt like a lifetime.”

A few years after the family reunited, Ramirez became eligible for the DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) program, which began in 2012 as an executive action by President Barack Obama. This year marks a decade for Ramirez as a recipient.

She and her family still resides in St. Louis. She works full-time doing quality control for a medical equipment company. On weekends, she serves as a catechist at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Ferguson, Missouri. “It feels like home. I’ve been here for most of my life,” Ramirez says.

*(continued on page 6)*



Ivonne Ramirez speaks to parishioners at Mary Mother of the Church Parish in St. Louis. Ramirez, one of NETWORK's "Social Poets," has been a DACA recipient for the past decade. Photo: Sid Hastings



Juliana Macedo do Nascimento, deputy director of federal advocacy at United We Dream and a DACA recipient. Photo: Diana Alvarez

## Shut Out

While DACA has allowed Ramirez to attend school and get a driver's license and a work permit, the realities of being a recipient remain at the forefront. She is one of roughly 580,000 active DACA recipients.

"Our permits and status allow us to be here for two years, and then we have to renew six months before," she says. "This year, I'm OK, but next year, I have to start thinking about sending all the paperwork and the fee, which is \$495. How will I get that extra income to pay for that?"

Recipients are ineligible to vote in federal elections, and Ramirez's voting rights are nonexistent. Some states and municipalities allow noncitizens to vote in local elections like city councils, mayoral and school boards. Missouri is not one of them.

"If you pay your taxes, contribute to society, and show that you're a model citizen, I don't see why the efforts to put something permanent for [us] aren't there," Ramirez says.

In 2022, NETWORK honored Ramirez as one of the organizations' inau-

gural "Social Poets," young justice-seekers whose lives and work define the challenges and possibilities of the coming decades. Unfortunately, permanent legal status for undocumented people in the U.S. remains an unaddressed challenge.

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"Immigrants are often some of our strongest allies in maintaining democracy and the institutions that allow our democracy to prosper."

— CHRISTIAN PENICHERT-PAUL

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At its height, DACA had around 840,000 recipients, says Juliana Macedo do Nascimento, deputy director of federal advocacy at United We Dream, the largest immigrant youth-led network in the country. A DACA recipient herself, she was 14 when her family migrated to

the U.S. from Brazil. Macedo do Nascimento calls DACA the largest "victory of the immigration movement in decades."

The program, however, has faced ongoing legal battles since its origin, leaving recipients in constant limbo.

"Many don't know how much danger the policy is in," Macedo do Nascimento says.

The latest challenge happened on Sept. 13 of last year, when Texas federal judge Andrew Hanen ruled again that DACA is unlawful. Now, DACA will likely revisit the Supreme Court in 2025.

Although Hanen blocked new program applications, he left DACA unchanged for existing recipients during the anticipated appeals process. Recipients can continue to renew and apply for Advance Parole, which allows certain immigrants to leave the U.S. and return lawfully, said Macedo do Nascimento.

"You feel like you're on a roller coaster," says Bruna Bouhid, senior communications and political director at United We Dream. "You never know if this will be your last chance to apply or if, in a year or six months, you will lose



Bruna Bouhid, senior communications and political director at United We Dream, at a UWD Congress in Miami.  
Photo: United We Dream

“If you get to know them and understand why they came to the U.S., you would happily vote in honor of them.”

— IVONNE RAMIREZ

all those things you had planned for or worked hard to get.”

Bouhid, who became a recipient at 20, says the legal fights reveal that DACA will “not be our saving grace. We need something permanent. We need citizenship.”

### Government Inaction

“It’s really up to Congress to find and support the solution,” says Christian Penichet-Paul, assistant vice president of policy and advocacy at the National Immigration Forum. “It’s the only branch of government that can ensure DACA recipients and other young DREAMers can stay in America long term and potentially become lawful permanent residents.”

Penichet-Paul says distrust among both parties and lack of courage helped derail legislative action and execution. He also predicts immigration reform talks in Congress will not advance during this election year.

“Democracy is such a precious thing, and it can take a long time to come up with a compromise,” Penichet-Paul says. “Sometimes, getting to the right place requires multiple little steps.”

As to when a policy window might open up, he notes, “It’s always said that Congress works best on a deadline. Unfortunately, that might be the next Supreme Court decision.”

Penichet-Paul stresses that there is bipartisan agreement and existing text that can serve as the bill that “finally provides permanence for young DREAMers who’ve been in America since they were little kids.”

One option could be a new version of the DREAM (Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors) Act, first introduced in 2001. A version introduced last year by Senators Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) and Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) would permit noncitizens brought to the U.S. as children to earn permanent residence after meeting specific education or work requirements. Durbin and Graham introduced similar legislation in the last three sessions of Congress.

Additionally, Rep. Linda Sanchez (D-CA) introduced the U.S. Citizenship Act of 2023, which would tackle the sources of migration, reform the visa system, and “responsibly manage the southern border.”

“We can have a pragmatic system, looking at who needs and wants to migrate, but let’s create a system that is fair and humane for everyone,” Bouhid says.

Ramirez admits that she’s “a little scared” for the looming 2024 election but encourages those eligible in her community to vote.

“A lot of Americans know at least one, if not many, DACA recipients and immigrants,” she says. “If you get to know them and understand why they came to the U.S., you would happily vote in honor of them.”

Ramirez says her Catholic faith inspires her to be vocal about the challenges immigrants face.

“I never want to stop talking about us and why we need to become citizens,” she says.

Penichet-Paul says immigrants have grown up as “American as any U.S. citizen in many ways” and take civic participation and community service seriously.

“Immigrants are often some of our strongest allies in maintaining democracy and the institutions that allow our democracy to prosper,” Penichet-Paul adds. “Democracy can coexist with DACA and immigration. They’re about good governance and ensuring that people can reach their full potential, nothing more, nothing less.”

*Sydney Clark is a New Orleans native and multimedia producer based in Washington, D.C.*

# Living Out of Our Shared Humanity

## *We Lose Ourselves When We Disown Our Neighbor*

**I**t should be simple. Our faith propels us towards caring for one another. Scripture commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves. More specifically, Exodus instructs us: “You shall not oppress or afflict a resident alien, for you were once aliens residing in the land of Egypt. You shall not wrong any widow or orphan. If you ever wrong them and they cry out to me, I will surely listen to them.”

These passages read as if they could guide our country. However, somewhere along the way, our politics took a turn. Instead of centering our commitment to welcome the stranger or care for our neighbors, we began pitting ourselves against one another. Instead of striving for unity and the common good, we began using one another as step stools to reach the next highest rung of the ladder.

As certain groups tried to attain a higher status, the divide in our country grew. How did this happen? Perhaps, it was when the notion of achieving the “American dream” took us out of living in community and into a large house with a white picket fence that divided us from our neighbors. As we move into our own insulated neighborhoods, we risk losing the recognition that we depend on one another. When we allow borders and fences, ZIP codes, and railroad tracks to physically, socially, and spiritually divide us, it becomes easy to pit one person against another.

And yet, we know that this is not how democracy or the common good flourishes. We know that division only serves as a kindling for hatred and fear of “the other.” When we lose sight of the people around us, it becomes far too easy to categorize the “other’s” struggles as a problem not worth fixing. We forget that what affects one of us, affects all of us.

Last year, in NETWORK’s Thriving Communities campaign, we named this. A thriving community is not possible unless every person has what they need to thrive. Every person is integral to our community. When one of us—or a group of us—falters, we all falter. Like the often-repeated phrase during COVID, “We are stronger together.”

At NETWORK, we also talk about building an inclusive world where we all work together to transform our politics and structures of racial, economic, and social injustice. We must recognize the dignity in every person, no matter their political party, religious tradition, nationality, race, gender, etc. As a Sister, I know that it is easy to claim that I work to ensure that we all have the opportunity to live abundant lives, but in practice

this is more difficult. We run the risk disowning or dehumanizing our neighbor or, worse yet, picking and choosing who we want to identify as neighbor.

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Every person is integral to our community. When one of us—or a group of us—falters, we all falter.

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In his message to the World Meetings of Popular Movements in 2017, Pope Francis said, “The grave danger is to disown our neighbors. When we do so, we deny their humanity and our own humanity without realizing it; we deny ourselves, and we deny the most important Commandments of Jesus. [...] But here we also find an opportunity: that the light of the love of neighbor may illuminate the Earth with its stunning brightness like a lightning bolt in the dark; that it may wake us up and let true humanity burst through with authentic resistance, resilience, and persistence.”

What does this mean for us? In both big and small ways, we might be called to move outside of our routines and comforts to begin building authentic relationships with one another. If we do not build these authentic relationships, we will not see ourselves as members of one community. This is not a “one and done” performance, but a lifelong commitment to being neighbor to one another. It is a commitment to border and boundary crossing so that we can begin to understand someone else’s self-interest, to understand worlds and viewpoints different than our own, and to witness to a future full of hope.



*Sr. Eilis McCulloh, HM, pictured here at a Jan. 9 rally to save asylum, is NETWORK’s Grassroots Education and Organizing Specialist.*

# NETWORK Annual Report 2023

Founded by Catholic Sisters in 1972, in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, NETWORK is an inclusive, national, Catholic advocacy organization open to all who share our values, working to achieve equity and justice for everyone. Grounded in Gospel values and the Catholic social justice tradition, NETWORK transforms our society by shaping federal policies that achieve racial, economic, and social justice; serve the common good; and honor the dignity of all.



Dear NETWORK Supporters,

Reflecting on the impact of our work in 2023, we are struck by the extreme chaos that faced our shared political ministry. The most dysfunctional and unproductive Congress of the modern era brought multiple threats of a government shutdown and cuts to critical human needs programs. In response, justice-seekers from across the country gathered in full force to choose community over chaos.

In this report, we outline the visits, emails, calls, and other actions that the NETWORK community made last year as we urged Congress to protect vulnerable families. During NETWORK's Thriving Communities campaign, advocates held rallies in Erie, Youngstown, Long Island, and Capitol Hill to appeal for "Care Not Cuts." Nearly 10,000 Catholic justice-seekers from all 50 states signed a letter calling on Congress to invest in welcoming communities. In spite of the chaos in Congress, our community stayed focused and engaged with hope, dedication, and passion for the common good.

We also celebrate the completion in 2023 of our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Endowment Campaign that raised \$5 million, a communal effort to sustain this vital work. As the campaign closed, the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration made a transformative \$2 million gift: \$500,000 toward our Endowment Fund, and \$1.5 million in support of our strategic expansion into climate justice advocacy. With the support of our members and partners, NETWORK Advocates had our second biggest fundraising year ever—just behind 2022. And while NETWORK Lobby's expenses outpaced external revenue, careful stewardship of reserve funds enabled us to meet mission and achieve our goals.

Thank you for your engagement and support in 2023, which has prepared us well for the work ahead. Together, we will choose community over chaos, so we can all have a brighter future where everyone can thrive, no exceptions.

In Solidarity,



Joan F. Neal  
Deputy Executive Director  
and Chief Equity Officer



Mary J. Novak  
Executive Director



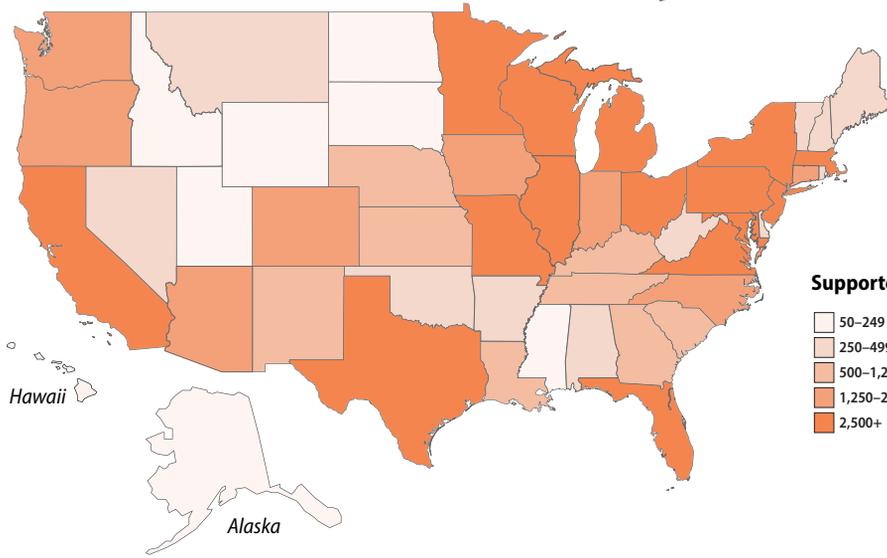
TOP: Laura Peralta-Schulte of NETWORK Government Relations

MIDDLE: Leslye Colvin, Chair of NETWORK Advocates Board

BOTTOM: NETWORK staff

NETWORK is two organizations with one mission: NETWORK Advocates is a 501(c)(3) tax-deductible organization and NETWORK Lobby is a 501(c)(4) organization. These two organizations work closely together to further our movement for justice and peace.

# OUR NETWORK Community



We were honored to have more than **92,000** supporters across the country in 2023

## Our Work By The Numbers

**2,714,552** emails sent to NETWORK supporters in **183** email blasts

**391,802** visits to the NETWORK websites by **167,198** visitors

**363,956** NETWORK text messages sent to advocates

**24,816** Connection issues mailed to NETWORK members

**2,144** calls to Members of Congress

**81** blog posts published to the NETWORK website

**203** sign-on letters and vote recommendations supporting/opposing legislation

**23** press releases

**16** episodes of the Just Politics podcast

**40,576** TOTAL FOLLOWERS ON NETWORK'S SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

**11,200** Twitter

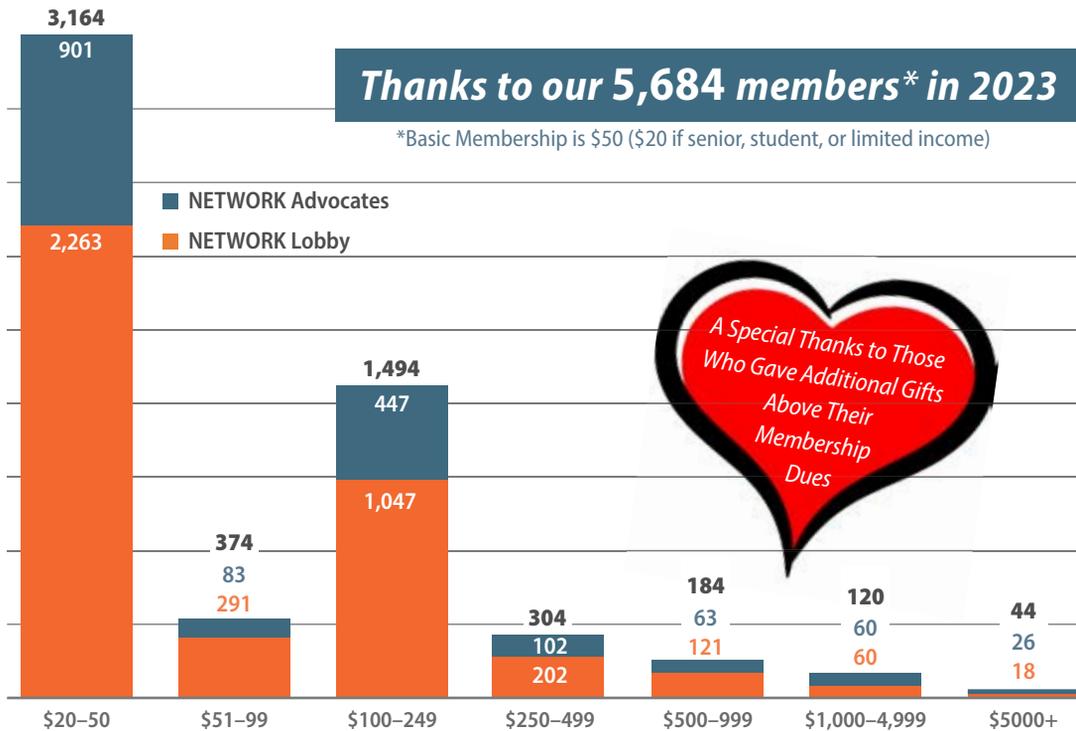
**1,043** Instagram

**28,333** Facebook

### Thanks to our 5,684 members\* in 2023

\*Basic Membership is \$50 (\$20 if senior, student, or limited income)

■ NETWORK Advocates  
■ NETWORK Lobby



**846** first-time donors

A Sister-Spirit welcome to our newest supporters!

**500** GEMs

People who participated in the Giving Every Month program

**2,274** Loyalty Society

People who have given consecutively for five years or more



# Bread & Roses

~ SOCIETY ~

Members of NETWORK's Bread and Roses Society play a vital role in building the justice movement for many years to come. By planning to remember NETWORK in their will or estate plans, members will make substantial, enduring commitments to our community's long-term work to create a society that promotes justice and the dignity of all in the shared abundance of God's creation.

For more information on how to make a planned gift to NETWORK, please contact us at [development@networklobby.org](mailto:development@networklobby.org).

Alice and Robert Beezat  
 Kim+ and Stephen Benoit  
 Margaret Betz  
 James Biechler  
 Carol Ann+ and Lee J. Breyer  
 Dawn Calabia  
 Susan Doherty  
 Albert Eisch  
 Michael J. Grillot  
 Jean Hamann  
 Jane Houtman  
 Irma and Robert Howarth

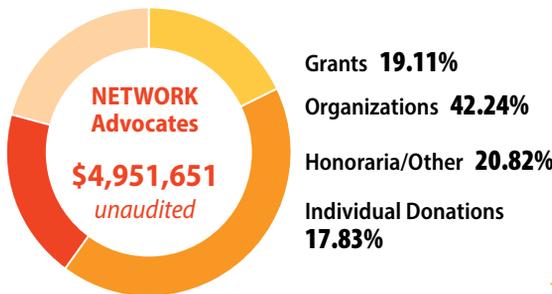
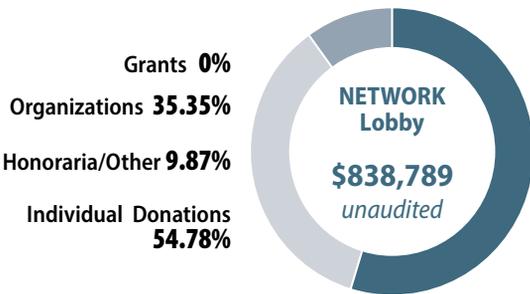
Mary and Calbert Hubbard  
 Lyn Kirkconnell  
 Alice Kitchen  
 Dr. Norma LaSalle  
 Derek and Chandra Manning  
 Sarah Marin  
 Elizabeth Morancy  
 Mary J. Novak  
 Fr. John Oesterle  
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 Suzanne Polen  
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 Rev. Charles Topper  
 Bernadette Tourtual  
 Carol Watchler  
 Francine Wickes  
 Amy and Stephen Zeder  
 Dr. Jerome Zurek  
 + deceased

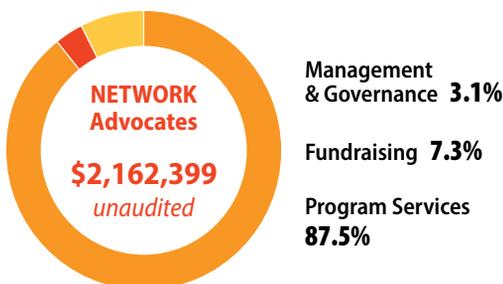
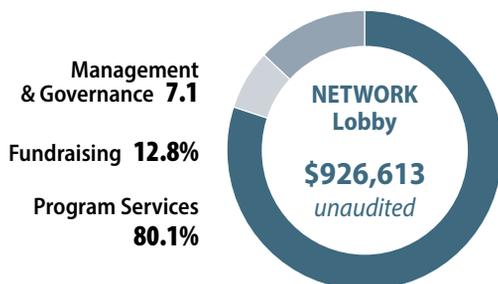
## Financials

Copies of audited statements as well as IRS 990 documents can be found at: [networklobby.org/financials](http://networklobby.org/financials) (for NETWORK Lobby) and [networkadvocates.org/financials](http://networkadvocates.org/financials) (for NETWORK Advocates)

### 2023 Revenue



### 2023 Expenses



## IN MEMORIAM

We honor the memory of those whose estates supported NETWORK in 2023. We also recognize those who passed in 2023 and were remembered through gifts from relatives and friends.

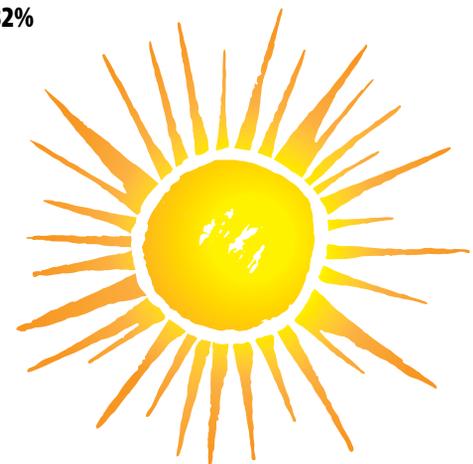
We are honored to be entrusted with their legacies, which sustain this work for many years to come.

### Estate Gifts

Fr. Kenneth McDonald

### In Memory

Margaret Ahmann  
 Barbara Aldave  
 Rev. Dr. Robert L. Bateman, Jr.  
 Sr. Clarita Bourque MSC  
 Sr. Jean Carpinelli, SUSA  
 Sr. Grace Gately, PBVM  
 Theresa Grant  
 Sr. Dolores Henke, OSM  
 John Horejsi  
 Joann Marie Kriege  
 Joan Morris  
 Douglas Payne  
 Louis H. Reimers  
 Sr. Shirley Roberg, SNJM  
 Linda E. Rodriguez  
 Eve Shy





1

1. Mary J. Novak joins interfaith and secular group speakers at a #CareNotCuts rally on Capitol Hill.



2



3

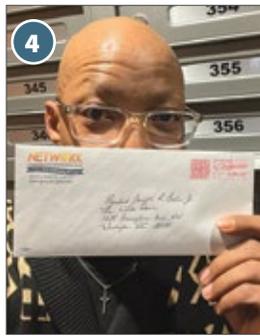


5



6

2. Ronnate Asirwatham of NETWORK Government Relations speaks at a rally on Capitol Hill.  
3. Sisters bless a letter signed by thousands of Catholics asking Congress to invest in humane immigration programs.



4



8

4. Min. Christian Watkins of NETWORK Government Relations mails a letter to President Biden urging executive action on reparations for Black Americans.



7

5. Justice-seekers in Louisville, Ky. call on Congress to fund human needs programs.

7. Sisters of St. Joseph and Erie Mayor Joe Schember attend a #CareNotCuts rally.



9

8. Joan F. Neal and Mary J. Novak meet President Joe Biden at the White House.  
9. Mary J. Novak speaks at an interfaith sunrise vigil commemorating the Jan. 6, 2021 insurrection.

# Move Past the Unserious

## *People Who Want Action on Immigration Should Look to These Proposals*

**W**ords have consequences. And almost nowhere is that truer than when dealing with immigration. People like to think that they are good to their word when they say they want action on immigration and care about finding practical solutions. After all, it's a serious issue that touches millions of lives and practically every community. We should be adopting serious proposals. But what does it really mean to be serious?

Many people, especially elected officials, betray their unseriousness by how they talk about immigration. Unfounded claims of a “migrant crime” wave are dangerous and inaccurate. These claims feed into racist tropes by fueling fear and hatred towards immigrants and people of color, making our communities less safe.

Fearmongering gives cover to politicians wishing to pass or enact terrible policies. The recent legal attack by the Attorney General of Texas on Annunciation House—a series of shelters that serve migrant people across the Southwest—is one small example of right-wing extremists attacking people seeking safety, as well as the people of faith who serve them.

We have also seen this type of attack in extreme bills against immigrants and people who welcome them in the state legislatures of Arizona, Idaho and Georgia and in the U.S. Congress. Instead of putting forward workable solutions, Congressional extremists keep pushing for unworkable failed proposals that the American public has rejected. They think this is a good way to get unpopular policies through. But providing a veneer of legality for attacking immigrants makes it everyone less safe.

This is the same xenophobic rhetoric that brought a gunman to the Pittsburgh synagogue and a gunman to the El Paso Walmart. Unserious people can still create serious threats, and the policies of deterrence and the rhetoric of racism these politicians are proposing make all who live in the borderlands and people of racial and religious minorities everywhere unsafe.

It is important to focus on what constitutes a serious immigration policy proposal, and happily, we have plenty of examples. At the end of January, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus released its immigration principles for the second session of the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress. Comprised of 18 policy proposals within a framework of four pillars—immigration reform, jobs and the economy, border safety, and regional migration concerns—these proposals are what serious immigration policy looks like, and what people of faith and goodwill should be pushing Congress and the Administration to adopt.

These include:

- Increase funding for asylum processing and legal representation programs for adults, and guarantee access to counsel for asylum seekers in federal custody.
- Create family reunification programs for additional countries to assist with backlogs.
- Facilitate access to work authorization for newly arrived immigrants.
- Fund community-based case management programs that decrease immigration detention.
- Protect Dreamers and DACA recipients.
- Provide a pathway to citizenship for undocumented individuals.
- Update the registry cutoff date through H.R. 1511, the Renewing Immigration Provisions of the Immigration Act of 1929.
- Advance immigration protections through H.R. 3194, the U.S. Citizenship Act.
- Establish a humanitarian visa for pre-screen asylum seekers.
- Expand protections for minors seeking to be reunited with parents holding legal status in the U.S.
- Protect undocumented spouses or parents of military members by providing a path of legal residency and eliminating the threat of deportation.
- Advance protections for agricultural workers through the Farm Workforce Modernization Act of 2023.

These are serious proposals that would create real change by actually addressing the problems created by our broken immigration system. Any person, elected or otherwise, who claims to be serious about the border and immigration but isn't embracing these proposals, is not being serious. In fact, they are very likely trying to use the plight of suffering people to get you to buy into a “solution” that will cause only more suffering and put more people in danger. And that's serious.



**Ronnate Asirwatham is NETWORK's Government Relations Director.**



Left: Min. Christian Watkins of NETWORK Government Relations speaks outside the White House on Jan. 22 to call on President Biden to take executive action to protect democracy.

Right: NETWORK Executive Director Mary J. Novak (center) joins Elvira Ramirez (left) of Maryknoll Lay Missionaries and Maryknoll Sr. Jenny Natividad at the Do Not Be Afraid March and Vigil for immigration in El Paso on March 21.



Voting Record Deliveries: Advocates pay visits to Members of Congress to share how they scored on NETWORK's 2023 Voting Record. (Left) Pam Laflin delivers a 100% certificate to Spencer Gutierrez, staffer to Rep. Lizzie Fletcher (TX-07). (Center) Gail Roussey, Katie Zivkovich, Ed Zivkovich, Alice Hinkel, and Sr. Beth Ann Tercek, SND, meet with Katie Burger, third from left, staffer to Rep. David Joyce (OH-14), who scored 43%. Right: Bob Kloos and Judy Opalach present a 100% certificate to Rep. Shontel Brown (Oh-11).



Left: Senator Alex Padilla of California speaks at a Jan. 9 rally to reject anti-immigrant proposals that would gut the U.S. asylum system, separate families, and send vulnerable people back to danger. Right: Advocates from Ohio hold a virtual meeting with staff of Ohio Senator J.D. Vance to urge support for the expanded Child Tax Credit.



Front row: John Carr, Mary Novak, Rabbi David Saperstein, Imam Talib Shareef, Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner, Rep. Glenn Ivey, Bishop Vashti McKenzie, and Rev. Margaret Kibben; middle row: Dr. Bridget Moix, Rabbi Jonah Pesner, Rev. Cindy Lapp, Rev. Adam Taylor; back row: Rev. Tony Lee, Craig Swandby, Rev. Galen Carey, Dr. David Anderson.



Left: A group of interfaith leaders, led by Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner and including NETWORK Executive Director Mary J. Novak, met with Rep. Glenn Ivey (MD-04) on Feb. 7. The group issued a joint letter calling on Speaker Johnson to include humanitarian assistance for Gaza in aid to Israel.



**N**ear the end of his life, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. posed the question, “Where do we go from here: chaos or community?” In 2024, NETWORK understands this year’s election as a time to answer that question definitively for generations to come. We must choose the value of human community, lived in solidarity and mutuality, so that all people can thrive. As Pope Francis says, “**The only future worth building includes everyone.**”

We recognize that many elected officials and candidates for office have already chosen chaos. Those who choose chaos push a vision of the future that belongs only to the rich and powerful, and everyone else is left to suffer in the fallout of a world robbed of basic freedoms. Choosing cha-

os means **cutting human needs programs—providing health care, housing, and nutrition assistance**—in hopes that the people served by these programs will lose faith in our government and the belief that democracy is worth having. It means **refusing to adequately support the humanitarian infrastructure at our border** and then using the problems created by this to stoke fear and hatred toward immigrants.

We have a vision of something better. Pope Francis said at World Youth Day in Portugal that the church is for everybody: “**Todos! Todos! Todos!**” We at NETWORK adopt this call and the vision for our future where everyone can thrive — no exceptions! Part of this faith-filled approach to politics is being a **multi-issue voter**.

## 2024 ELECTION TRAINING SERIES

*Informed, Engaged, and Committed*

Join NETWORK Advocates from across the country for a four-part series to dig deeper into what it means to be a multi-issue Catholic voter, learn strategies to engage people in challenging conversations and build hope-filled narratives that inspire people to care about important issues, and explore concrete actions you can take to influence the election.

### EQUALLY SACRED

At the center of NETWORK's 2024 election work is Pope Francis' vision of inclusion. For that reason, we designed our 2024 Equally Sacred Checklist as our core resource. We encourage you to share it with your friends, family, parish, and fellow justice-seekers! This one-page guide (provided here in both English and Spanish) offers a multi-issue framework for Catholics and other faith-filled voters to discern whether candidates support policies that build up the common good. These familiar issue areas—health care, economic justice, climate justice, gun violence, democracy, and immigration—are framed in the language of freedom: whether or not policies create the conditions for people to thrive in a particular way. The six freedoms outlined by the checklist are:

- ▶ Freedom to be healthy
- ▶ Freedom to care for ourselves and our families
- ▶ Freedom to live on a healthy planet
- ▶ Freedom from harm
- ▶ Freedom to participate in a vibrant democracy
- ▶ Freedom to live in a welcoming country that values dignity and human rights

With these six freedoms, we believe that we can foster the conditions for a flourishing, enduring democracy. Achieving this vision will require everyone to take action on behalf of justice. Our success is in our hands. As NETWORK Executive Director Mary J. Novak says, "When people of faith talk about freedom, that's how major change-making occurs in this country." We saw this with Dr. King and his dream of freedom. It is up to us to finish the work and Build Anew.

### WEEK 1 ▶ Multi-Issue Voting

*Our social teachings and tradition provide us with a framework for living responsibly and building a just society. In an election year, this includes being a multi-issue voter. Join us to learn more deeply about what it means, as Catholics, to be multi-issue voters, and what that looks like this election year. Using NETWORK's Equally Sacred Checklist as a guide, we will discern ways you can be an informed, engaged, and committed voter this year.*

**MAY 7, MAY 9, or MAY 11**

### WEEK 2 ▶ Breaking Through the Election Noise, Part One

*Conversations are hard in a world as divided as ours, and yet they're critical to advancing the world that we want to build together. Join us to discuss the barriers to transformation and develop the skills needed to break down those barriers and advance justice through transforming those in our own circles, during this election season and beyond.*

**MAY 14, MAY 16, or MAY 18**

### WEEK 3 ▶ Breaking Through the Election Noise, Part Two

*So-called commonsense narratives often define what people believe. The secret to believability is crafting a narrative that people can understand and repeat easily. Join us to learn the principles of Race Class Narrative and how it helps to build an effective narrative that invites people into the work of justice without watering down our goals.*

**MAY 21, MAY 23, or MAY 25**

### WEEK 4 ▶ Act to Impact

*We all know that this year's election is incredibly important; however, figuring out how to engage most strategically can be confusing and even overwhelming. This training will explore a variety of concrete ways you can prepare yourself and your community for the upcoming election. Participants will learn more about how to develop a voting plan, coordinate a voter registration drive, volunteer at the polls, and much more!*

**MAY 28, MAY 30, or JUNE 1**

**Sign up online!**



# EQUALLY SACRED CHECKLIST

## How can we know we are voting for candidates who promote the common good?

Pope Francis makes it clear: **Catholics and all people of good will are called to be multi-issue voters, not single-issue voters**, in the 2024 elections and in our continued participation in public life. This resource can support you in educating yourself as a faithful voter on the issues and concerns that are “**equally sacred**.”

**“We cannot uphold an ideal of holiness that would ignore injustice in the world.”**



—Pope Francis, *Gaudete et exsultate*, par. 101

### FREEDOM TO BE HEALTHY

#### Will you vote for candidates who...

- will protect and expand affordable health care for all and end the injustice of medical debt?
- support policies to reduce the cost of prescription medicines so patients can afford lifesaving care?
- support ending the Black maternal health crisis by investing in the expansion of critical programs to support the lives of parents and babies?
- support ending hunger in our nation with needed food assistance programs, such as SNAP, WIC, and school lunch programs?

*The Catholic Church affirms that food and health care are not privileges reserved for the wealthy, but universal rights.*

### FREEDOM TO LIVE ON A HEALTHY PLANET

#### Will you vote for candidates who...

- will address the climate crisis and invest in a rapid, just transition to renewable energy?
- will end policies that benefit fossil fuel corporations, such as tax subsidies and approval of pipelines?
- will address pollution and toxic dumping that disproportionately affect Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities, and ensure clean air and water for all?

*Care for our common home is a requirement of the Catholic faith.*

### FREEDOM TO PARTICIPATE IN A VIBRANT DEMOCRACY

#### Will you vote for candidates who...

- refuse to use violent language or threats of violence against other candidates or groups of people?
- will ensure all eligible voters have access to voting, and restore voting for formerly incarcerated people?
- will limit the power of the wealthy to manipulate our democracy through unlimited dark money and gerrymandering?

*Catholic teaching affirms that every person has both a right and a responsibility to participate in our shared political processes, which we must structure to serve the common good.*

### FREEDOM TO CARE FOR OURSELVES AND OUR FAMILIES

#### Will you vote for candidates who...

- will reduce costs for families, including via a robust Child Tax Credit, paid leave, and funding for childcare?
- will ensure all workers can earn a living wage and have the right to join a union?
- will ensure the wealthy pay their fair share of taxes, including by supporting a billionaire's tax?
- will address skyrocketing housing costs, including by investing in affordable housing, housing assistance programs, and a renter's tax credit?
- will support future generations by expanding training and apprenticeship programs and free college?

*Catholic teaching promotes the dignity of work, the rights of workers, and an inclusive economy that places people over profit and ensures that we all have what we need to thrive.*

### FREEDOM FROM HARM

#### Will you vote for candidates who...

- support common sense gun control, including banning the use of AR-15s and other weapons of war, so our children and communities can live safely?
- will protect the rights of marginalized communities including Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities as well as LGBTQ+ people?

*The Catholic Church insists upon every person's intrinsic worth, dignity, and right to live in safety—with no exceptions.*

### FREEDOM TO LIVE IN A WELCOMING COUNTRY THAT VALUES DIGNITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

#### Will you vote for candidates who...

- support the right to asylum and paths to citizenship, and prioritize integration?
- promote inclusive policies that support border communities rather than militarization?

*The Catholic Church affirms that we all have a right to migrate to seek a safe and good life for ourselves and our families, and that nations have a moral imperative to welcome immigrants.*

# TEMAS IGUALMENTE SAGRADAS

## ¿Cómo podemos saber que estamos votando por candidatos que promueven el bien común?

El Papa Francisco lo ha dejado claro: **los católicos y todas las personas de buena voluntad están llamados a ser votantes de múltiples temas, no votantes de un solo tema**, en las elecciones del 2024 y en nuestra continua participación en la vida pública. Este recurso puede ayudarte a educarte como votante fiel en los temas y preocupaciones que son "igualmente sagrados."

**"No podemos defender un ideal de santidad que ignore la injusticia en el mundo."** —Papa Francisco, *Gaudete et exsultate*, par. 101



—Papa Francisco, *Gaudete et exsultate*, par. 101

### LIBERTAD PARA ESTAR SANOS

#### ¿Votarás por candidatos que...

- protejan y amplíen la asistencia sanitaria asequible para todos y pongan fin a la injusticia de la deuda médica?
- apoyen políticas que reduzcan el costo de los medicamentos recetados para que los pacientes puedan costear los servicios médicos vitales?
- apoyen el fin de la crisis de salud materna de las mujeres afrodescendientes mediante la inversión en la expansión de programas críticos para respaldar la vida de las madres y los bebés?
- apoyen la erradicación del hambre en nuestra nación con los programas de asistencia alimentaria necesarios, como SNAP, WIC y los programas de almuerzos escolares?

*La Iglesia Católica afirma que la alimentación y la asistencia sanitaria no son privilegios reservados para los ricos, sino derechos universales.*

### LIBERTAD DE VIVIR EN UN PAÍS ACOGEDOR QUE VALORE LA DIGNIDAD Y LOS DERECHOS HUMANOS

#### ¿Votarás por candidatos que...

- apoyen el derecho de asilo y las vías hacia la ciudadanía, y den prioridad a la integración?
- promuevan políticas inclusivas que apoyen a las comunidades fronterizas en lugar de la militarización?

*La Iglesia católica afirma que todos tenemos derecho a emigrar para buscar una vida segura y buena para nosotros y nuestras familias, y que las naciones tienen el deber moral de acoger a los inmigrantes.*

### LIBERTAD PARA PARTICIPAR EN UNA DEMOCRACIA VIBRANTE

#### ¿Votarás por candidatos que...

- se nieguen a utilizar lenguaje violento o amenazas de violencia contra otros candidatos o grupos de personas?
- garanticen el acceso al voto a todos los votantes con derecho a ello y restablezcan el voto para las personas que han estado encarceladas?
- limiten el poder de los ricos para manipular nuestra democracia a través del dinero ilegal ilimitado y distorsionar la representación política y afectar la equidad en el sistema electoral por medio del "gerrymandering"?

*La doctrina católica afirma que toda persona tiene tanto el derecho como la responsabilidad de participar en nuestros procesos políticos compartidos, que debemos estructurar para servir al bien común.*

### LIBERTAD PARA CUIDAR DE NOSOTROS MISMOS Y DE NUESTRAS FAMILIAS

#### ¿Votarás por candidatos que...

- reduzcan los gastos de las familias, entre otras cosas, mediante un sólido crédito fiscal por hijos, ausencia con goce de sueldo y financiación para el cuidado de los niños?
- garanticen que todos los trabajadores puedan ganar un salario digno y tengan derecho a afiliarse a un sindicato?
- garanticen que los ricos paguen los impuestos que les corresponden, entre otras cosas apoyando un impuesto multimillonario?
- aborden el problema del costo exorbitante de vivienda, invirtiendo en viviendas asequibles, programas de ayuda a la vivienda y un crédito fiscal para inquilinos?
- apoyen a las futuras generaciones mediante la expansión de programas de capacitación y aprendizaje, así como educación universitaria gratuita?

*La doctrina católica promueve la dignidad del trabajo, los derechos de los trabajadores y una economía inclusiva que anteponga las personas a los beneficios y garantice que todos tengamos lo que necesitamos para prosperar.*

### LIBERTAD PARA VIVIR EN UN PLANETA SANO

#### ¿Votarás por candidatos que...

- atiendan la crisis climática e inviertan en una transición rápida y justa hacia las energías renovables?
- pongan fin a las políticas que benefician a las empresas de combustibles fósiles, como las subvenciones fiscales y la aprobación de oleoductos?
- aborden el problema de la contaminación y los vertidos tóxicos que afectan desproporcionadamente a las comunidades afrodescendientes, personas de color, e indígenas, y garanticen aire y agua limpios para todos?

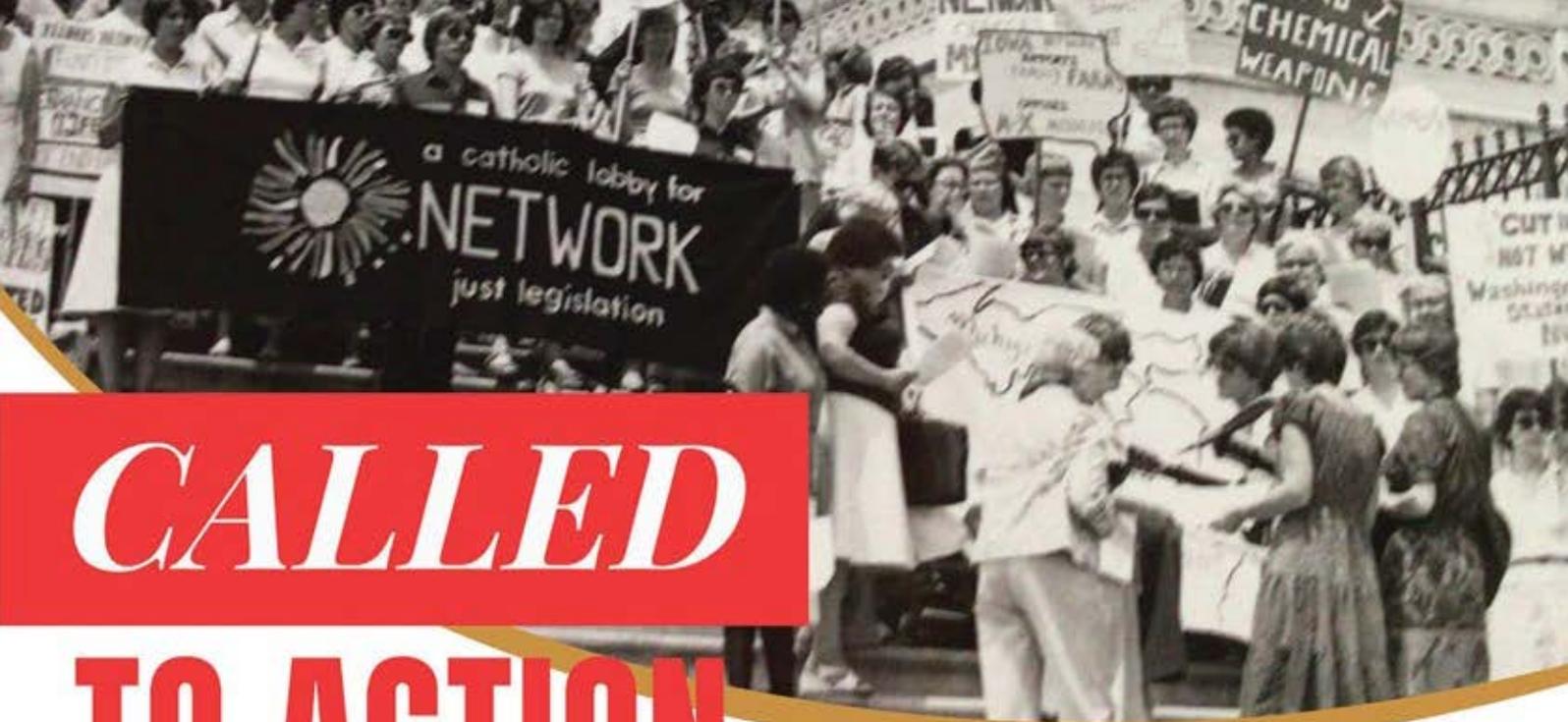
*El cuidado de nuestra casa común es una obligación de la fe católica.*

### LIBERTAD FRENTE AL DAÑO

#### ¿Votarás por candidatos que...

- apoyen el control de armas con sentido común, incluida la prohibición del uso de armas AR-15 y otras armas de guerra, para que nuestros niños y comunidades puedan vivir seguros?
- protejan los derechos de las comunidades marginadas, incluidas las comunidades afrodescendientes, de color, e indígenas, así como las personas de la comunidad LGBTQ+?

*La Iglesia Católica insiste en el valor intrínseco, la dignidad y el derecho de toda persona a vivir con seguridad, sin excepciones.*



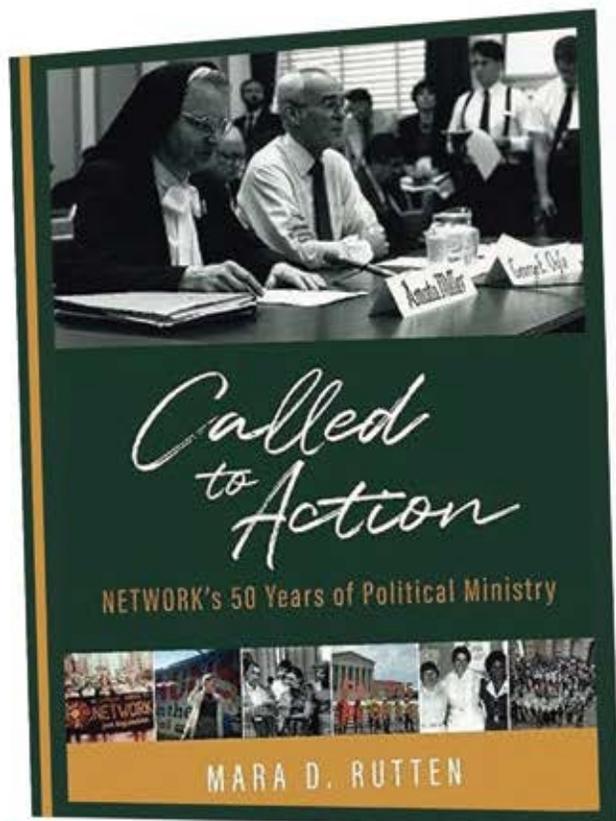
# ***CALLED***

# **TO ACTION**

*NETWORK's 50 Years of Political Ministry*  
by Sr. Mara Rutten, Ph.D.

**How Catholic Sisters worked together to set justice ablaze.**

**47 Roman Catholic sisters gathered in Washington, D.C. to find a way to build a more just world in 1971. The result was the founding of NETWORK, the nation's first Catholic Social Justice lobby, and the establishment of a new kind of ministry.**



**Read how Catholic Sisters in the early 1970s were galvanized by the Vatican II reforms and Catholic social teaching to put the Gospel into action by lobbying for the common good.**



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**POPE FRANCIS  
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**YOUR VOTE CAN HELP US ALL THRIVE!**