



As of 7/4/2020

Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice *UU advocacy in the nation's capital*

July Write Here! Write Now!

Contact: advocacy@uusj.org or 703-786-5206; www.uusj.org

Letters Due: Thursday, July 16 by 6pmET

Submitting Letters: 1. **Email to:** advocacy@uusj.org put "congregation name & WHWN July" in the subject line. 2. **Mail to:** Lavona Grow, 2308 N. Buchanan St., Arlington, VA 22207. 3. **Online:** [Letter Submission Form](#)

Make Police Accountable! Urge our U.S. Senators to Support George Floyd Justice in Policing Act



WHY ARE WE WRITING -- NOW?: As a nation we are faced with a moral moment to take action. Yet again another Black person died at the hands of police. **This time**, it was George Floyd. **This time**, it resulted in an unprecedented number of protests, marches, vigils of people together - young and old, Black, brown and more white people than ever before -- demanding action. Demanding an end to systemic racism and racist police practices. **This time**, we must capitalize on the momentum of persistent demands for ACTION. With policing legislation pending in Congress we have a rare opportunity to do something on a national level. Also why now? The delegates at the UU General Assembly just weeks ago voted on an Action of Immediate Action (AIW) calling us to address systemic racism. **Let's work to change things this time.**

BACKGROUND: Hearing the public cry to address systemic racism and excessive use of force in policing, House Democrats and Senate Republicans have introduced competing bills to tackle these issues. The two bills share some features but differ widely. (See [New York Times](#) article outlining differences). Much of the work needed to address the racist culture and funding of police must be done at the state and local level, but there is an essential federal role.

The Senate Republican's Justice Act (S 3985) – sponsored by Sen. Tim Scott (R-SC), the chamber's only Black Republican member – called for narrower restrictions and focused on transparency and training. Senate Democrats on June 24 blocked debate on the bill, saying it doesn't go far enough.

On June 25, the House passed The George Floyd Justice in Policy Act ([H.R.7120](#)), sponsored by Rep. Karen Bass (D-CA) and crafted by the Congressional Black Caucus. A companion Senate bill ([S.3912](#)) -- sponsored by Sen. Cory Booker (D-NJ) and 36 co-sponsors ([see list by state HERE](#)) -- is not being considered in the Senate at this time. The measure is supported by more than 400 organizations and includes provisions that they consider needed in any policing bill passed.

These include: Prohibiting discriminatory racial and religious profiling; instituting a "national" use of lethal force standard; banning chokeholds and no-knock warrants for drug cases; creating a nationwide police misconduct registry; and demilitarizing police by limiting military-grade equipment. See Talking Points for additional measures.

Sen. Brian Schatz (D-HI) has proposed an [amendment](#) to the National Defense Appropriations Act (NDAA), which UUSJ and the UU Service Committee endorse. The amendment bars the Defense Department from transferring specific military-grade weapons under DOD's 1033 program.

UU GROUNDING: Our 1st UU Principle affirms the inherent worth and dignity of all people. And our 2nd Principle calls for justice, equity and compassion in human relations. We are also called to build a beloved community that includes liberty and justice for all. We passed a Statement of Conscience, [Criminal Justice and Prison Reform](#) (2005). And in June 2020 passed the AIW -- [Amen to Uprising: A Commitment and Call to Action](#). Consistent with the demands of our partner -- the Poor People's Campaign -- to End Systemic Racism and Establish Justice and End Police Violence.

(See other side for Key Message, Talking Points, and Sample Letter)

KEY MESSAGE/ASK

“More of the same” is unacceptable. Congress must act now. Police must be held accountable. We must reimagine what policing looks like and invest in our communities to address systemic racism and poverty. **Support key provisions of the Justice in Policing Act (S.3912/H.R.7120) a vital step to addressing systemic racism.** (Ask Democrats to co-sponsor; ask Republicans to support provisions)

TALKING POINTS - KEY PROVISIONS IN THE BILL

[The first four focus on immediate actions to protect life. Pick one that speaks to your concerns, or tell your personal story. Move hearts to move minds.]

Key provisions in the Justice in Policing Act Fact Sheet [HERE](#) from the Congressional Black Caucus:

- **Prohibit federal, state, and local law enforcement from racial, religious and discriminatory profiling.** Mandates training on racial profiling for police; requires collecting data on all investigations.
- **Ban chokeholds and no-knock warrants for drug cases.** Federal funding would be tied to the bans.
- **Limit use of deadly force.** Require police to exhaust all non-lethal methods before using deadly force.
- **Limit use of military-grade equipment.** Weapons of war don't [belong in our communities](#) and should not be used against the American people. **Between 1997 to 2014, the Department of Defense transferred \$4.3 billion in military equipment to local law agencies.** Invest instead in communities.
- **Require police to use body cameras and police vehicles to have dashboard cameras.**

Additional provisions. Hold police accountable in court by making it easier to prosecute offending officers; investigate police misconduct; empower communities to reimagine public safety in an equitable way; change law enforcement culture with training to build integrity and trust; improve transparency by collecting data on police misconduct and use of force; and make lynching a federal crime.

SAMPLE LETTER TO YOUR SENATORS

[Use your own words. Speak from your heart -- this is only a sample letter.]

[Today's date]

Dear Senator _____ *[name]* _____, *[Write to both of your Senators.]*

I'm a Unitarian Universalist from *[optional: name of congregation and location]*. I urge your support of vital measures of the **Justice in Policing Act (S.3912)** - a critical step to address the unacceptable deaths of people of color at the hands of the police. As a nation, we must reimagine policing and invest in communities to address systemic racism and poverty. Taking action at the federal level sends a clear message to local and state police that they must root out racial and religious profiling. Death at the hands of police must stop. Police must be held accountable for their actions and know they are not above the law.

[pick a provision of the bill that is important to you] I especially support... I feel strongly that...

I am heartbroken by the deaths of people of color at the hands of police. *[insert your personal experience or story, heartbreak, concern, what you envision for the future of policing, etc.]* *[Or ask a question like: How do you plan to address the disproportionate deaths of Black and brown people? the lack of accountability of police?]*

[adapt a closing such as...] Please support the Justice in Policing Act - support including these provisions in any bill that passes.. Please speak out against police brutality and systemic racism in policing. It's a matter of life and death.

Thank you for consideration and I look forward to hearing from you. *[For Republicans ask them to support the provisions in the bill and to speak up in support of the provisions; for Democrat and is not a co-sponsor, ask for co-sponsorship; if a co-sponsor/the sponsor, thank them and ask that the senator speak up on this issue.]*

Sincerely, *[YOUR NAME and COMPLETE ADDRESS so they know you are a constituent and how to contact you.]*

(See other side for Why We Are Writing, Background, UU Grounding, and Instructions for Delivering Letters)