

**UUSJ Committee and Task Force Reports
for December 9, 2017 UUSJ Board Meeting**

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Committees that did not submit a report or had no new information to report since the last Board meeting:

- Audit Committee (not a standing committee)
- Communication & Outreach Committee
- Gala Planning Committee (not a standing committee; information reported in the Program Committee)
- Governance Task Force (formerly Bylaws and Standard Operations Committee; not a standing committee)
- Green Activists - Environmental and Climate Justice Task Force
- Issue Selection Process Task Force (not a standing committee)
- Nominating Committee

Advocacy Oversight Committee Report -- As of December 7, 2017

Members: Lavona Grow, chair, Bob Denniston, Loretta Garcia,, Ed Kringer, Anna Rhee (consultant), Sean McCarthy, Larry Underwood

The purpose of this group is to coordinate UUSJ's advocacy activities, materials, and infrastructure to support advocacy work; and to help identify, guide and provide feedback regarding UUSJ's advocacy program and opportunities.

Update: At our September 9 Board meeting, UUA President Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray agreed to sign a letter for the Dream Act 2017 for our delivery to Members of Congress. We drafted a letter but when quick response was needed for a special interfaith initiative she chose to sign a faith "sign-on letter" instead of adapting our letter. The decision was attributed to being expeditious and might possibly be due to yet unfilled staff positions in her office. In addition, the UUA is known for values partnering and "inter-religious" over "stand alone" letters.

Advocacy Corps (AC) FYI from Anna and Lavona:

- There are now 46 volunteer members on the Advocacy Corps roster. Of those ten have not participated in an AC day but have chosen to stay on the list; two are intending to participate in the coming months; and 26 have attended AC two or more times. The median number of participants is 12 per visit. The highest number of participants was on November 14 Dream Act 2017 with 20 volunteers.
- New Advocacy Corps information video: will be available by the end of January.
- Advocacy Corps information sessions: two Zoom video conference information sessions will be offered, one in late December and one in early January.
- Citizen Engagement Advocacy Training: schedule now.

What's Working: The Advocacy Corps monthly model works. We have it down to a good system. We are recognized in some of the Hill Senate offices. We have many people volunteering for: congregational outreach team; data entry; and to help prepare for AC days (sorting, logging WHWN letters) and assembling material into 6-8 teams. We continue to have new AC members joining nearly monthly. WHWN letter writing is catching on nationwide (and being replicated). Growing interest in our work by congregations outside our region. Now over 100 downloads of our WHWN toolkit. Our new issue information pages on the website are robust and up-to-date.

What's Challenging: The flip side of "What's Working." Managing all the volunteers and AC members is challenging. There are many moving parts to conducting the AC Day — it's a challenge to sustain. Writing materials, preparing website information page, documenting incoming letters, creating teams and organizing the materials for each team, copying, assembling team packages, pulling together the name badges, note paper, business cards, etc. for each AC day, is labor intensive. We are fortunate to have volunteers willing to come together to help with the task.

When there are multiple issues in play it's difficult to keep track and keep up. These past few weeks there was insufficient bandwidth to handle more than one issue at a time without significantly stretching a couple of volunteers. Writing and editing tasks are time consuming due to issue complexity, rapid pace and the collaborative process. Much more outreach to congregations is needed to make our model

effective. The process is relational and takes time. Keeping track of the electronic/digital material is huge and we don't have a solution yet. We use GoogleSheets and Docs extensively and it's become an administrative nightmare.

Old business still under consideration:

- Revision of the 2012 Board guidelines for sponsorship, endorsement and using the name of UUSJ. Bob and Larry volunteered at the September 9 Board meeting to work on this task.
- How to prioritize issues for advocacy consideration including for Advocacy Corps Hill visits.
- Coalition of UU State Action Networks (CUUSAN): Next steps are ours to develop covenant with CUUSAN by June 2018 and further develop a "relationship model" to work with a limited number of interested SANs in the short term.

New business:

At the September 9, 2017 Board meeting we discussed the need for clear lines of reporting authority and clarification of organizational structure coming out of the needs of working groups. Although this is a governance/ Executive Committee task, out of need, since there is no Governance task group, we've proposed an organizational structure and visual depiction of the lines of authority. The Core Group has reviewed and modified the drafts. To be presented to the Board at the December 9 meeting.

Needed to support the Advocacy Corps:

- Expertise to create the necessary infrastructure to organize and easily access all the different spreadsheets and documents associated with our work. We started a data management project with a team of three volunteers to tackle the problem but even the experts say it's too big for volunteers. Martha Ades to give update at the Board meeting.
- Promotional material - communications committee: 1) updated brochure or other professional handout about UUSJ for a leave-behind on the Hill, and 2) general promotion of our advocacy programs. Are we updating the UUSJ brochure, using large postcards or bookmarks for promotion?
- Advocacy Corps materials: 1) new badges; 2) notepad or post cards for leaving notes to staff. Currently Lavona runs off letterhead colored note paper for Hill visits.

Questions for Board consideration:

The Board voted at the February 4, 2017 meeting to move forward on going nationwide. We discussed some implementation issues at our April 8 Board meeting (see minutes) and anticipated some discussion at the September 9 Board meeting but because of an extended visit with the UUA President we ran out of time. The following questions still remain — some are planned to be discussed at the December 9 Board meeting.

- What is our transition plan and timeline?
- What is the estimate of cost and how will this effort be funded? - short term new grant as of June 2017 \$15,000 plus \$2,500 matching grant challenge.
- Does our infrastructure and governance structure support such a transition? (including how to represent, welcome, and accommodate Board members or congregations from outside our region) - Governance Task Group met once before the chair, Hannah Connolly, resigned as a Board member.
- Specifically, how does going nationwide impact the model of member congregations and "fair share" donations?

Ongoing Board member support:

- Promote the UUSJ Advocacy Program. Direct people to UUSJ’s website advocacy page and issue pages. Contact Anna and Lavona at advocacy@uusj.org.
- Arrange a Congregational Citizen Engagement Training event at your church.
- Encourage and recruit new members to the Advocacy Corps.
- Promote “Write Here! Write Now!” and distribute WHWN bookmarks.
- Identify people interested in GOTV efforts - voter registration and Get Out the Vote for 2018.

UUSJ Capitol Hill Advocacy Corps Visits:

- **September 12 Environmental Budget Issues:** Ten AC members joined with the Inter-religious community members in celebration of the Season of Creation to meet with senators’ and representatives’ staff to “share our concerns for the Earth” including adequate funding for the EPA funding for environmental and climate justice programs in general and protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.
- **October 16 “Faithful Budget”:** addressed the federal budget as a moral document
- **November 14 Dream Act 2017 Senate:** 20 AC members; delivered nearly 400 UU constituent letters to 16 Senators; visited 54 Senate offices; seven meetings pre-arranged; later in the week delivered six thank you letters to Democratic sponsors of the bill. **November 17 and 20** AC members delivered more letters.
- **November 21 Tax informational gathering meetings:** Friendly office visits to gather intel on targets, timeline and state-of-play of the tax bill. Three AC members met with tax staff in Senators Brown, Cardin, Warner’s offices. Great meetings!!
- **November 27, 28, 29, and December 4 Tax letter drops:** Senate office visits by four AC members.
- **November 29 Tax:** Delivered more UUSJ letters, by six AC members; Interfaith meeting with Sen. Corker’s staff, Bob Denniston and Adam Wasserman; meeting with two staffers at Sen. Kaine’s office, Lavona Grow and Lynn Ferguson Riggs.
- **December 5 Dream Act & TPS escorts:** As part of an interfaith “fly in” we volunteered to help out of town advocates to navigate the Hill and facilitate three meetings. Pat Behenna, Paint Branch, and Lynn Ferguson Riggs, Arlington, escorted three people from New Jersey for meetings with staff and Rep. Lance. Turns out one visitor is the Executive Director of the New Jersey State Action Network. How lucky can we be? He looks forward to working on issues that overlap with state concerns.
- **December 7 Interfaith faith leaders letter drops:** Two AC members joined with inter-religious faith community for three meetings and to deliver letters.

On the Near Horizon:

December 12 Advocacy Day: Topic to be determined if we will go out on and deliver UUSJ letters on tax bill and/or deliver UUSJ, UUA, UUSC letters on Dream Act along with constituent letters. We will deliver letters from All Souls, Unitarian Church members who conducted two Sundays of WHWN letter-writing.

Other Advocacy and Regulatory Issues in play:

Clean Power Plan: Promoting the comment period and hearings on the repeal of the CPP. The deadline has been extended to January 16. Information link is on the UUSJ home page of the website. Three new hearings announced on December 6 in California, Wyoming and Kansas (in addition to one already held in West Virginia).

Advocacy and Regulatory Issues on the horizon: None

New or Changing Partners and Networking:

- Closer working relationship with the Friends National Committee on Legislation (FCNL) re tax, immigration and environment. We share information on an ongoing basis.
- Not previously mentioned - Anna monitors the Domestic Human Needs Washington Inter-religious Staff Community (WISC) table listserv - healthcare, some tax policy and budget issues. Lavona continues to sit on the WISC-Ecology and Environment table as a representative of the UUA.
- Nov. 3 Pablo, Bob and Lavona met with Meredith Larson, Director of Advocacy and Strategic Communications, new staff person at UU Service Committee (UUSC), along with Pam Sparr, UUSC, but soon to leave (both are members of All Souls).
- In December, Lavona had two relational conversations with Rev. Brock Leach, vice-president of Mission, Vision and Strategy, UUSC Board.
- December 7 Lavona talked with Nora Rasman, Standing on the Side of Love, about social media campaign tips and ideas to better advocate on our issues and promote our efforts. Need people to help Tweet and “like” and post to our Facebook page.

Submitted by: Lavona Grow, Chair advocacy@uusj.org

Immigration Task Group Report -- As of December 6, 2017

Members: David Strauss, Don Chery, Charlotte Jones-Carroll, John Gubbings, Ron Outen; Ex Officio members: Lavona Grow, Anna Rhee, Bob Denniston

Status: The Immigration Task Group remains in somewhat of a leadership vacuum following the resignation of Dean Wanderer as chair and member. No current member is prepared to step up fully to chair the group. The membership also declined with the departure of newer member Paola Renjifo who accepted a job and could no longer participate in the Zoom afternoon meetings. Further efforts to add membership and identify a chair are needed.

In the interim, Charlotte Jones-Carroll has volunteered to send meeting reminders and seek agenda items. Lavona Grow has gently led the interim discussions. The subcommittee has decided to continue semi-monthly meetings until the DREAM Act of 2017 is either passed in some form, or voted down. The TPS program is also in a critical state, as is comprehensive immigration reform but an advocacy strategy is not yet clear. Plans for the next face-to-face subcommittee meeting where strategic direction could be discussed are pending.

Actions: Over 20 persons, including three from this Task Group, joined the Advocacy Corps on November 14 on the Hill, to focus on immigration issues. Seven Senators' offices accepted appointment requests and were visited by teams of UUSJ volunteers. Another 40-plus Senators' offices were visited to leave copies of letters supporting the DREAM Act of 2017 from UUA, UUSC and UUSJ leaders. Letters of individual support for DREAMers had also been collected from constituents of key Senators in states outside the DMV, through contacting UU congregations in those states, and these were delivered to the relevant offices. Prior research on positions of certain key Senators and Congressmen had been undertaken by Immigration Task Group members earlier in the month. Several of the congregations (Rockville, River Road) had also collected individual letters from their members in time for delivery on November 14.

UUSJ and members of the Immigration Task Group also participated in several recent vigils in support of DACA, DREAMers, TPS and against the Muslim ban in September, October and November. These took place both in front of the White House and on Capitol Hill (Hart Senate Office Building). An inventory of DMV-area UU congregations' immigration and refugee activities has been initiated. A questionnaire has been developed, reviewed, and converted to an electronic survey to be directed initially at UU congregations through their UUSJ board members, with a suggested deadline of December 31. The purpose of this effort is to share information with interested congregations regarding activities supporting fair immigration and/or refugees.

Submitted by Charlotte Jones-Carroll

The Program Committee Report -- As of December 5, 2017

Members: Martha Ades, Chair, Pablo DeJesus, Lavona Grow, John Gubbings, Marsha White

The Program Committee holds monthly meetings. The Fall was busy for the Program Committee as it planned and held UUSJ's 8th Social Justice Awards Benefit Celebration. This event is held every two years – this year the venue was Cedar Lane UU Church on October 29, 2017, with attendance of 110 people. Catered hors d'oeuvres were offered followed by a program of awards, and the premier performance of The Hymn for the Doers composed by Cedar Lane musician Bill Williams. Eight awards were given to seven different congregations. Even as it rained outside, inside everyone had a grand time celebrating our Social Justice Activists who have been busy “Building a Better World”. Additionally over \$1600 was raised for UUSJ Social Justice Grants.

Thanks for the additional help given to make this a successful event by Bill Alsmeyer-Johnson, Adam Wasserman, Armele Vicelus, Bill Ades, Elizabeth Stevens, Sarah Masters, Cathy Knapper. An awards committee, composed of voting participants Bill Alsmeyer-Johnson, John Harris and Marsha White, and non-voting participant Pablo DeJesus, reviewed applications and made decisions based on nominees' projects and social justice work.

The awards given in 2017 were:

- Collaboration Award – Accotink UU Church
- Innovative Social Justice Programming Award – Reeb Project for Voting Rights, All Souls Church, Unitarian
- Congregational Social Justice Program Award – Mount Vernon Unitarian Church
- Lifetime Achievement Award – Ken Schilling, Goodloe Memorial UU Congregation
- Environment/Climate Justice Award - Environmental Justice Project of the Peace and Justice Ministry, First Unitarian Church of Baltimore
- Special Recognition Award for Advocacy – Lavona Grow, UU Church of Arlington
- Emerging Leader Award – Heather Wiemer, UU Congregation of Fairfax
- Minister's Award – Rev. Dr. Linda Olson Peebles, Interim Minister of Accotink UU Church

Future activities for which the Program Committee will be involved are:

- Planning for a program in the Spring that will gather Social Justice Leaders from all congregations to learn from each other by sharing their activities and programs.
- Support for programs and meetings conducted by the three tasks groups and the Advocacy Corps.
- March 24, 2018 Board Meeting – Maryland Congregation
- June 2, 2018 Board Meeting – Virginia Congregation

Submitted by Martha Ades, Program Chair

Escalating Economic Inequity Task Group Report -- As of December 7, 2017

Members (regular participants at recent EEI meetings)

Martha Ades, Earl Koteen, Serena Lowe, Bob Denniston, Lavona Grow, John Gubbings, Peter Clark, Sean McCarthy, Rita Roth

The EEI holds regular Zoom meetings online the first Sunday of each month. The EEI group was focused this past month on analyzing, and lobbying against, the tax bill. EEI members supported and took part in advocacy work on Capitol Hill that included delivering letters from UUs in several states opposing the bill, and meeting with Senate staffers to convey our views and/or get information and guidance on the best approaches to use. EEI members also took part in Hill meetings with interfaith partners through WISC, helping deliver a letter against the tax bill with over 2000 faith leader signatures.

EEI members helped with quick response to gather information about key Senators and their views on the tax bill, and are participating in a similar effort now on the House side. This information is going into spreadsheets for current and future use.

Submitted by Adam Wasserman, Chair, Escalating Economic Inequity