

**UUSJ Committee and Task Group Reports  
for June 2, 2018 UUSJ Board Meeting**

**Reports Submitted as of May 31, 2018**

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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  
Green Activists - Environmental and Climate Justice Task Group  
Gala Planning Committee (not a standing committee)  
Governance Task Force (not a standing committee)  
Issue Selection Process Task Force (not a standing committee)  
Nominating Committee

**Advocacy Oversight Committee Report – May 31, 2018**  
(Includes the Advocacy Corps and related advocacy efforts)

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

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

The committee met May 9, 2018. We discussed the need, purpose, feasibility and structure of the committee, spending much time discussing pros and cons to generalist and/or issue team member representation on the group. We plan to meet via Zoom monthly. The AOC now vets recommendations for sign-on letters and advocacy efforts that do not fit in any one of our task groups.

**Climate Justice Month National Letter-Writing Campaign:** We partnered for the second time with the UU Ministry For Earth (UUMFE) on a nationwide letter-writing campaign during April. The topic was the RECLAIM Act to support 25 coalfield states and three Indian tribes. We prepared the tools for congregational letter-writing including sample letter, talking points and an information page on our website. The campaign was featured on the main page of the UUMFE Climate Justice Month web page. This year we are conducting strategic outreach, and this month two volunteers called over 20 congregations and several State Action Networks. The effort met with mixed results. Very labor intensive and few congregations participated in the letter-writing.

On May 8, 17 members of UUSJ's Capitol Hill Advocacy Corps (AC) went to 50 Senate offices and delivered 550 letters from 23 congregations in 17 states. One congregation in Kentucky sent letters in late but they will be delivered on our next Hill visit June 12. About 12 letters to House members were also received. We had eight pre-arranged Hill office appointments but landed up with nine additional walk in visits for a total of 17 appointments in all!! We sent messages back to all the congregational contacts for which we had contact information.

**Advocacy Data Pilot Project:** We have contracted with Heather Coccozza Organizing and Design for phase 1 to analyze our software requirements, design, develop and test the concept using GoogleForms. The pilot will use UUA congregational source data and a test of data entry for our Write Here! Write Now! Letter-writing campaigns. The phase 1 pilot will include working with a team of up to seven people, two testers, and provide training and 90 days support to a system administrator.

**Grants to support Advocacy, Outreach and GOTV plans:**

We received a grant for \$15,000 from the UU Funding Program that will go into effect either July or August 1, 2018. We applied for \$20,000 UU Funding Program Grant submitted March 15, 2018 to fund increased efforts to conduct outreach nationwide, address data collection needs, and explore fundraising strategies. We partnered with the UUs for a Just Economic Community and the UUMFE. In light of not receive full funding or a challenge grant option we will have to now adjust our scope of work.

In June we will apply for a UUFP Get Out The Vote (GOTV) grant similar to the 2016 grant we received for a DMV regional effort. Intent is to expand on what we did in 2016 and update our current Toolkit, prepare a checklist for how to select questions to ask candidates, and support efforts beyond our region to downstate Virginia, rural Maryland, and possibly 1-2 other states. Grants are awarded on a rolling basis; response will be known within three weeks after application. We anticipate asking for a grant around \$1,500. The UUA will partner with UUSJ on a national webinar. This is not directly related to our GOTV DMV+ efforts.

**Write Here! Write Now! Letter-Writing Campaign Toolkit (WHWN):** Our WHWN Letter-Writing Toolkit users' survey was delayed, originally expected to go out the week of April 9 but we decided to wait until after Climate Justice Month. Now scheduled for the week of June 4.

**Citizen Engagement Advocacy Training:** scheduled June 16 at UUC Rockville.

**UUSJ Capitol Hill Advocacy Corps Visits:**

- April 12: Farm Bill House side protect SNAP (formerly known as Food Stamps). The bill had not been released yet. We shared concerns about work requirements.
- May 8: RECLAIM Act Senate. See report above.
- June 12: Farm Bill Senate side. Protect SNAP. The bill has not been released yet, mark-up is expected the week of June 4. We will share concern over the House version and encourage the current bipartisan negotiation that seems to be taking place in the Senate.

Submitted by: Lavona Grow, Advocacy Oversight Committee Chair

## **Development Group Report – May 29, 2018**

On May 9, 2018 the Development Group of UUSJ, formed after the April 7 Board meeting, met at WES to strategize on raising the necessary funding for UUSJ's operations. The group included David Strauss of UUC of Rockville, Gary Magnuson of Frederick UUC, Peter Bishop of WES, Bob Denniston of UUC Arlington and UUSJ Board chair, and Pablo DeJesús, of All Souls Church, Unitarian (DC) and UUSJ Executive Director. Assisting as needed with specific competencies are Martha Ades of UUC Fairfax and UUSJ Board Secretary, Bill Alsmeyer-Johnson of Mt. Vernon, and Mike McCord, UUSJ Treasurer.

We agreed that a sustainable base of non-grant funding is needed because typical grantors will not give to organizational activities that include lobbying of any kind. Since our primary advocacy focus is influencing lawmakers on Capitol Hill, our funding efforts must consist of activities that help create a stable funding base to make us self-sustaining as we grow our programs.

Over the past couple of years, UUSJ has been functioning through grants from UUFP, "fair share" contributions from member congregations in the DMV, and from individual memberships and donations. Unfortunately, those sources are not enough; we are using reserves to fund our ongoing operations. In less than two years, we will use up our reserves absent new inflows of money.

We have cut costs (e.g., delaying the replacement of our administrative assistant) to the point at which any more cuts will jeopardize our successful programming. It is now time to work aggressively and passionately to create the kind of funding that will sustain and grow the advocacy programs of UUSJ.

A minimum of \$20,000 in new funding annually is needed to sustain our current level of programming.

Raising more than that will allow growth and development concomitant with the successes our advocacy programs have been producing. While this seems like a daunting amount, we broke it down into a variety of activities, all of which can be accomplished over the next 18 months. This effort will include some significant changes in concept and self-definition: for example, the Board will need to consider personally committing to raising funds separate from the congregational "fair share" commitment, and the now-biannual awards gala (post meeting note: funds go towards the Social Justice Fund grant program) should be converted into a fundraising gala event. Details of each activity that will help this fundraising campaign will be presented at the Board meeting of June 2.

Submitted by: David Strauss

## **Escalating Economic Inequity Task Group Report – May 29, 2018**

The EEI holds meetings online the first Sunday of each month at 7pm ET

**Main participating members:** Martha Ades, Rev. Earl Koteen, Lavona Grow, Peter Clark, Adam Wasserman (chair) Ex Officio member: Bob Denniston, Chair.

The Escalating Economic Inequity (EEI) group held a productive strategy session on May 19 at Mount Vernon with 15 attendees, plus input from members who couldn't come in person. The meeting focused on what EEI's priorities should be in light of events over the past year, and our expectations for Congress and new legislation in the coming year. Since the legislative session this election year is likely to have few new initiatives, it was suggested that now would be a good time to take stock and perhaps identify some long term issues that EEI could monitor and support. The group brainstormed a large number of possible topics for EEI's attention, and then voted (with each person in attendance getting 5 votes) to see what priorities emerged. Several areas seemed to be of greatest interest:

Protecting/Strengthening the Social Safety Net. This would include advocacy on housing, healthcare, access to food, childcare, and retirement. Existing programs are all being targeted for reductions and/or tougher eligibility requirements.

Expanding Opportunity. We need to do more to give new skills and chances to people who are losing jobs to automation and foreign competition. This would include advocacy for quality education for all, affordable college education, training in new skills, targeting development to distressed areas, and infrastructure programs to provide jobs and create better transportation systems to get people to jobs and opportunity.

Reform Tax and Financial Systems. Create a more progressive and less distorting tax system (one that reverses the direction taken by last year's tax bill) while defending—and expanding—regulation and oversight of banks and Wall Street.

In all these areas there was interest in both current legislation and opportunities for witness and advocacy, and also in exploring “big ideas” for the long term—things that aren't feasible now, but could be when the political balance changes. For instance, Big Ideas for the social safety net might be a universal guaranteed income, free childcare for working families, or a single-payer healthcare system. A Big Idea for more opportunity might be free college tuition. A Big Idea for tax/financial reform might be to break up the biggest banks.

The group recognized that political change was necessary to make progress on all key issues. While not our central focus, EEI urges UUs to help wherever possible to register voters and get out the vote for upcoming elections. EEI will look for more opportunities to partner with think tanks and like-minded advocacy groups. One way will be to invite outside experts and activists to participate in regular webinars.

In light of this discussion, EEI will consider a name change to better reflect the areas that active participants want the group to focus on.

Submitted by: Adam Wasserman, EEI Thought Leader

## **Immigration Task Group Report – May 29, 2018**

Through May the Group has been meeting every two weeks

**Members:** Don Chery, Lavona Grow, John Gubbings, Charlotte Jones-Carroll (convener), Sean McCarthy, Dean Wanderer (members). Dean Wanderer just re-joined in May.

Ex Officio members: Pablo DeJesus, Executive Director and Bob Denniston, Chair. Anna Rhee, advocacy consultant -- participate as appropriate and as invited.

The principal activity was the preparation and execution of an action planning meeting, held on May 12 at River Road UU Congregation, that engaged 22 UUs from around the Greater Washington area on priority-setting for our work on immigration. In addition to exploring different process options beyond the all-important national-level advocacy and witness activities, we examined where we might do more on networking among UU congregations with regard to sharing resources (films, books, speakers, websites) to educate and raise awareness in our membership about immigrant and refugee issues, sharing contacts for service work (such as accompanying immigrants to ICE and court appointments or helping refugee families) and supporting local and state actions (such as affordable housing for refugee families and deportation defense funding). The outcome indicated there is support, especially for sharing education resources. The committee is now discussing how to carry that out.

On national advocacy, we have proposed that UUSJ sign on to a number of interfaith letters related to immigration matters, including mistreatment of immigrants being held. We were joined in a recent zoom meeting of the committee by Sen. Ben Cardin's chief counsel, Bill Van Horne, who briefed us on Senate-side plans for TPS holders, and general immigration reform including DACA, as well as responding to our queries. Committee convener also spoke with Rep. Jamie Raskin's staff member (Devon Ombres) to understand better the US House phenomenon "Queen of the Hill" and discharge petition, which is intended to bring different immigration bills to the floor in spite of the Speaker's resistance.

The survey of congregational activities on immigration and refugees has been completed (ten congregations responded, including all the larger ones). A summary of the committees, contacts and actions has been prepared, and is available for the UUSJ website, though it will be treated discreetly, to protect contact information from hostile trollers. A copy was shared with the May 12 action planning committee attendees.

Dean Wanderer sent his assistant to a recent meeting of VACOLAO with Latin American consular officers and shared the meeting notes with the UUSJ committee. UULM-MD has just formed an immigration sub-committee, and they have been in contact with this committee to understand what we are doing.

Submitted by: Charlotte Jones Carroll, convener, UUSJ Immigration Committee

**Program Committee Report – May 29, 2018**  
The Program Committee holds monthly meetings

**Members:** Martha Ades, Chair, John Gubbings, Marsha White

Ex Officio members: Pablo DeJesus, Executive Director, Bob Denniston, Chair. Lavona Grow, AOC chair as needed and asked.

The Program Committee continues its monthly meetings and caring for the UUSJ program needs. Support for the Task Group meetings and quarterly Board meetings continues. We continue to revise program checklists that provide guidelines to facilitate meeting logistics.

Discussion for the upcoming programs in the summer and 2018-2019 year provide these potential events:

- **UUSJ's Advocacy Training June 16:** Afternoon at Rockville UU. Open to all UUs.
- **Post GA Meeting:** A webinar debriefing after GA to discuss any statements of conscious or Statements of Immediate Action; Possible date: Wed/July 11 at 7 PM.
- **Get Out the Vote:** Program/grant is in the works to assist with the Get-Out-the-Vote effort.
- **Post-election event:** We will gather people for networking, looking at opportunities, and election results debriefing. There is a possibility for a panel discussion with news reporters, UUA representatives and analysts. Possible date: November or December 2018
- **Play Reading - SWEAT:** Bruce McConachie from UUC Silver Spring will organize the 2017 Pulitzer Prize Drama SWEAT. A troupe of 6-8 people read a play from a stage. The play was performed at Arena Stage about a year ago about anti-racism. The purpose is educational and bringing the arts into justice work. This will be co-hosted by the Chalice Theatre UUC Arlington who will produce the program this fall. The play is expected to be taken on the road to at least one or two other congregations.

Submitted by: Martha Ades, Program Chair