



Write Here! Write Now! July 9, 2019, Advocacy Day Hill Visits

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

Congregation Organizer: Emailed letters due 12pmET July 8. Mailed Letter Delivery - Must be received by Friday, July 5 to UUSJ % Lavona Grow 2308 N. Buchanan St., Arlington, VA 22207

Write Here! Write Now! Tell Your US Representative to Take Action to Keep Immigrant Families Together

Why We Are Writing

We are learning more each day about the horrible conditions in detention camps, where children are traumatized, denied basic toiletries, and seven of them have died in the administration's custody. Now the Administration is threatening massive raids that will add to the fear and panic, contributing to overcrowding and squalor, and more separation of parents from their children. While most of us react to the heartbreaking news, others are living through this horrific situation. This has brought a new urgency to address the escalating humanitarian crisis at our southern border. **This is a moral issue!** Congress has passed an emergency funding bill, but one which does not include protections for those in detention. And Congress will soon shift focus to appropriations for the 2020 fiscal year budget. **On June 22 the UU General Assembly passed a new Action of Immediate Witness on "Immigration and Asylum" that calls UUs to contact our members of Congress and tell them that we "...condemn the policies of the Administration."** With that charge, the UUSJ Capitol Hill Advocacy Corps will **raise our collective voices against the inhumane treatment of asylum-seekers at our southern border and against ICE raids and mass deportations that will devastate immigrant families.**

Key Message

Insist on increased use of alternatives to detention, reduce federal spending (2020 budget) on detention, deportation and border militarization, focus on improved safety and humane conditions for those detained; strengthen oversight of agencies dealing with immigrants and asylum-seekers.

Background and Legislative Status

The president has threatened to conduct ICE raids in 10 immigration court locations: Atlanta, Baltimore, Chicago, Denver, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, New York and San Francisco, targeting 2,000 families with members who have received deportation orders. The raids were set to begin Sunday, June 23 but 12 hours before the raids were to start, the president tweeted that he would delay the raids for a couple weeks in order to give Congress time to work out a solution to the "asylum and loophole problem at the southern border."

As of June 29, both the Senate and House had passed emergency border crisis funding bills, but in the end, without the needed protections for separated children in crowded detention camps, or prohibitions against diverting the supplemental funds to enforcement. Other bills such as S1894 reinstating the family case management program as a fair, humane and low-cost alternative to detention, have been referred to committees.

UU Grounding

We are called by our 1st Principle, the inherent worth and dignity of every person, and the [2013 Statement of Conscience \(SOC\), "Immigration as a Moral Issue"](#) which states: "Our UU Principles and Sources compel us to affirm that all immigrants, regardless of legal status, should be treated justly and humanely." This SOC calls us to "Support and participate in advocacy efforts to change immigration laws that are not moral..."

On June 22, 2019 the UU General Assembly passed an Action of Immediate Witness, ["Immigration and Asylum"](#) that calls for UUs to take action, which includes encouraging UUs to communicate "...with their Congressional representatives and condemn the policies of the Administration."

For years UUs have fought for compassionate immigration reform and an end to mass detention and deportation. We strongly support a just and equitable reform of our nation's immigration laws. While the reform process is pending, we ask Congress to take action that can immediately alleviate the suffering of thousands of immigrants and asylum seekers.

(See other side for Talking Points, Questions to Ask, and Sample Letter)

Talking Points on Immigration Issues

- We must reduce detention of immigrant families. Use alternatives that permit children to remain with their families, and where families and minors are detained for mandated short periods, assure safe facilities and humane treatment.
- We must halt ICE enforcement and deportation raids that create fear, panic, and trauma among immigrants.
- We must oppose additional funding for detention, deportation, and militarization of our southern border and strengthen Congressional oversight of DHS, HHS and their agencies to insist that they respond to immigrants in a fair, efficient and humane way, at the border, at detention centers, and in ICE offices.

Suggested Questions to Ask Your Representative (also for meetings in district offices)

- How would you address the inhumane treatment of immigrants and asylum-seekers?
- What is your position on ICE raids that sow fear and trauma among immigrants nationwide?
- How would you propose to strengthen timely and thorough oversight of enforcement agencies?

Suggestions for Writing Your Letters

- **Focus on the topic** – even if an issue seems complex your message should be clear based on our moral standing that the current situation is intolerable and not who we are as a people. We can do better than this.
- **Be brief, be courteous, be specific** - clearly state the issue and your position.
- **Be original and speak from the heart.** If possible, describe a personal experience or story, or select 1-2 provided talking points, **in your own words**, to support the main message.
- **Include a clear and specific action request.** “I urge you to...” “Please take action to...”

Sample Letter to Your Representative

[Use your own words -- this is only a sample letter. Please no form letters.]

[Today's date]

Dear Rep. _____,

I am a Unitarian Universalist from *[optional: name of congregation and location]* and I believe in the inherent worth and dignity of all people. I'm concerned that...

Please take immediate action to...

[To support the message, include in your own words a personal experience, story, concern, or pick a talking point to include. Is there a way that these issues impact you, family, friends, people in your community or your congregation (a sanctuary), etc.? Your stories help first change hearts; and then change minds] [And/ or ask a question that speaks to you and ask for a response.]

Please work across the aisle to address this serious humanitarian crisis.

[Write a personal closing.]

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME and include your COMPLETE ADDRESS so they know you are a constituent]

(See other side for Background, UU Grounding, Message and Instructions for Delivering Letters)