

Immigration Committee Report to UUSJ Board –September 2019
Immigration committee meets every other Thursday online at 4 pm ET

Active Members: Charlotte Jones-Carroll, convener, Gayle Boyd, Don Chery, Lavona Grow, Sean McCarthy, Dean Wanderer, Dave Strauss, Charlene Belsom Zellmer, Terry Grogan, Karen Scrivo.

Ex Officio members: Pablo DeJesús, Executive Director and Bob Denniston, Board Chair, - participate as appropriate and as invited.

Hill Advocacy on Immigration: The Immigration Task Group (ITG) joined the Advocacy Corps on July 9 to advocate for alternatives to detention, reduced federal spending for border enforcement, improved and more humane conditions for those detained, and better oversight of immigration agencies by Congress. We prepared materials for WHWN and leave behind letters for this visit. We also objected to planned ICE raids. Later in July, a few of us accompanied the National Sanctuary Collective in their visits to the Hill to protest draconian fines levied by ICE on persons in physical sanctuary. We developed a UUSJ statement opposing those fines to deliver, in addition offering some of these visitors lodging in our homes. In response to DHS' diversion of FEMA and other funds to ICE enforcement budget, we prepared statements in line with those of partners and sent them to the House and Senate budget committee leadership.

Hearings and webinars: ITG members continued listening to select live-streamed hearings of the House Homeland Security Committee and House Appropriations Committee (the latter on mental health issues of children in detention and separated from parents). We joined a webinar with Detention Watch Network related to Homestead Detention Center.

Homestead Detention Center Campaign: We joined AFSC and UUSC in a campaign to shut down the detention center for minors in Homestead, FL, actions on the Mall in DC on June 9 (Where are the Children?) and joining other faith groups to attempt to deliver a petition to HHS (unsuccessful on June 12, but delivered later by a smaller group).

Amicus Brief: We joined an amicus brief initiated by Muslim and Jewish groups that argued that the Administration's unilateral diversion of federal funds from other programs to bolster ICE and CBP enforcement actions, despite a huge supplemental budget appropriation approved by Congress, set a bad precedent for future unilateral actions that could harm religious minorities.

Immigration Film Fest: ITG members helped to promote (and in one case, to organize) the 2019 Immigration Film Fest kicked off in mid-September, including a special showing on the Hill for the first time, of films depicting impact on asylum-seekers on the Southern US border.

Strategic partnerships: ITG has begun to review the partners that we monitor and collaborate with to identify ways of relating more directly with impacted persons, as an outcome of the September board strategic retreat.