

Staff - Advocacy Report

October 3, 2020

Highlights:

1. Please see the graphs and data below that cover the period of reporting for the October 3, 2020 board meeting, and further back in time. We thank Paulette.
2. Please pay close attention to what UUSJ did in September. It may offer clues about what UUSJ's best response to advocacy during Covid-19 might look like.
3. The Executive Director's report for the same period lists advocacy activity not detailed here, with greater emphasis on partnerships, collaborations, and relationship management.

October 2020:

UUSJ has two advocacy education events scheduled and preparations for our October advocacy outing are already underway.

Event 1: Storytelling for Advocacy Workshop on Saturday, Oct. 10, 1-4pm ET via Zoom ([RSVP](#)). The board is invited to UUSJ's free Zoom workshop on personal storytelling and effective advocacy, focusing on how our stories can create change! This free workshop is led by Natalie Miller-Moore and is supported by our 2019-2020 grant from the UU Funding Program.

Event 2: Policy issue briefing scheduled with [Glenn Hurowitz, CEO, MightyEarth](#), who will speak with UUSJ and [UU Ministry for Earth](#) about his global campaign work and the topic of "Indigenous Communities and the Fight for Climate Justice Amid the Pandemic" on [Monday Oct. 12 \(RSVP\)](#).

Outing: Some materials are complete, including the classic *Write Here! Write Now!* (WHWN) handout, which staff then use to create the [on-line platform version](#). Tentatively outing dates have been identified for Tuesday and Wednesday October 20 and 21. Some consideration has begun on the prospects of an Action Alert aimed at the House to dovetail the WHWN effort aimed at the Senate.

Summary: UUSJ's recently self re-named **Environment Action Team (EAT)** has selected the topic "Ask Your Senators to Demand that Environmental Protection Administration (EPA) Address the Unjust Burden of Climate Change and Pollution on Frontline

Communities” using both UUSJ’s WHWN classic (handout) and on-line platforms. The EAT is calling for increased federal funding of environmental justice programs in the EPA budget for Fiscal Year 2021. Frontline communities battle pollution from power plants and factories and suffer the most from increased floods, wildfires, and heat-waves caused by climate change. This often leads to increased health problems, including COVID-19, due to poor air and water quality, disproportionately impacting low- income folks. Nearly 3,000 communities have lead poisoning levels twice as high as those in **Flint, MI** during its water crisis.

Participation: Letters are due by **Oct. 15**. Board members can join the issue briefing on Monday, Oct. 6, 3-4pm ET ([RSVP](#)) via Zoom with your peer, **David Shilton**, Arlington. **Kelly Perry**, UUSJ volunteer and former Hill staff member, will brief the UUSJ Capitol Hill Advocacy Corps (AC) on Tuesday Oct. 13, 10-11:00am ET via Zoom (for details email Anna G. Hooker at anna@uusj.org).

September 2020:

Action Alert: UUSJ declined a suggestion to prepare an Action Alert on Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. When polled, a majority of DRD participants, and other stakeholders, seemed to feel any action UUSJ could take would be perceived as too partisan.

Outing: We are nearing completion of the formal phase of engagement by the **Immigration Justice Task Group (IJTG)** on the issue they selected oversight of the Department of Homeland Security and inclusion of immigrants in COVID Relief as a dual appropriations matter.

The IJTG built on summer efforts to **stay active in advocacy** and helped UUSJ go deeper into testing “virtual” and “remote” alternatives explored and discussed during the spring and summer by Lavona Grow and John Peterson with both AC members and WHWN participants. Fundamentally, they built upon ideas and tactics that had been simmering during the Summer.

The IJTG effort amounted to a **mini-mega UUSJ Hill outing** uniting three UUSJ program silos, those are:

1. IJTG -- Policy Team (program)
2. WHWN -- program and participants
3. AC -- program and participants

In addition, they spurred testing of new engagement techniques for UUSJ, those were:

1. Simultaneous Action Alerts (AA) to both Senate and House, in deference to their assessment that the issue merited engagement of both Chambers
2. Deploying an [on-line Write Here! Write Now! \(WHWN\) platform](#) version of our classic WHWN

3. Most importantly including WHWN participants in UUSJ virtual meetings

UUSJ scheduled thirteen virtual advocacy visits. Note, having constituent letters or disclosing the status (or count) of letters was not a requirement for gaining meetings. However, in some cases the lack of constituent participants in a meeting was a disqualifier for securing the meeting. Noteworthy, UUSJ was able to meet with four of five priority #1 targets and a nice mix of priority #2 and #3 targets among the remaining eight meetings.

Highly important for UUSJ long term strategic challenges, the outings incorporated the participation of eight UUs with no prior participation in our IJTG or AC. These “guests” were a mix of WHWN participants and friends of such folks. Two of our “guests” were affiliated as leadership of UU State Action Networks (Iowa and Florida).

Of concern was the poor take up rate for joining meetings among AC members. It was lower than expected, with three joining meetings. It's not clear if that was due to:

1. The topic, Immigration. Anecdotally, UUSJ supporters seem to more easily gravitate to environmental justice concerns as it's viewed as more inclusive of their personal experience than our other topics.
2. Complexity of the ASK and/or material. The IJTG did deploy a “dual ask” for the Senate (oversight and COVID Relief), and appropriations arguments can be too theoretical for some folks.
3. The “internal” communications on the topic. One long time AC participant said “the invitation to participate was not compelling.”
4. The roll-out/advertising. Perhaps AC folks were insufficiently aware of the prospect in advance to clear their schedules. It must be noted that Charlotte offered an AC briefing, in advance of the meetings, and did invite AC members.
5. The spread of meetings across several days and hours, which is different than the face-to-face AC model where a focused participation of several hours can achieve a high volunteer satisfaction quotient

Initial observations:

1. Multiple debriefs may be needed:
 - a. The IJTG requires such a debrief and it has been scheduled for Oct. 8.
 - b. Other parties are interested in debriefing as part of “AIM Style” transfer of experience and lessons learned.
 - c. Staff have yet to debrief on the process.
2. Success in September was driven in no small part by the strength of the IJTG team, similarly October looks to be on strong footing in the hands of the **Environment Action Team (EAT)**. The DRD team has yet to be tested.
 - a. This raises concerns for our Economic Justice team which is defunct.
3. All stakeholders should understand that with WHWN participants as constituents we gain authenticity and latitude in the meetings but we lose stricter control over

the tone and character of those meetings.

- a. Perhaps populating meetings with more AC members will help.
4. It's important to consider the basic value of outreach, connection, and relationship cultivation. Some of our best meetings were unexpected and with lower priority targets.
5. AC member participation and Hill staff accessibility remotely may drive a need to upgrade UUSJ's Zoom account to accommodate multiple meetings at once and perhaps the ability to designate credentialed non-staff Hosts prior to the meeting. Early evaluation suggests an annual cost of \$600 additional dollars per year, to upgrade our single account license. Currently UUSJ pays \$149.99/year for Pro.

Initial recommendations:

- A. The EAT should plan around the core team's availability for its outings and engagement, perhaps over the course of two days but not more unless EAT members are very clear on the implications.
- B. The EAT should focus on an outreach pool designed to yield no more than twelve meetings over two days, perhaps reaching out to about twenty two offices.

August 2020:

We did not have a formal UUSJ outing for the month. However, we did promote existing Action Alerts (AA), in particular leading into August 20, 2020 and votes related to [Demilitarize Civilian Law Enforcement](#), urging Congress to co-sponsor and vote for amendments to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which was first deployed during July.

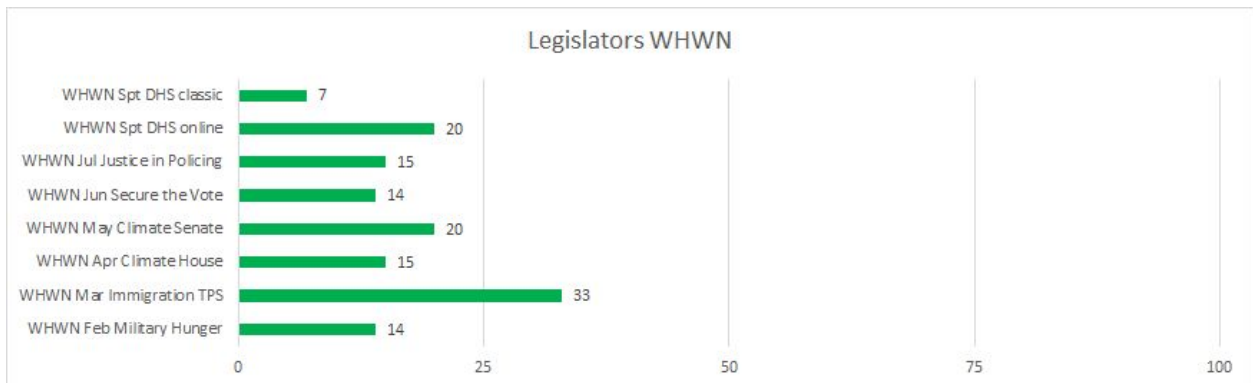
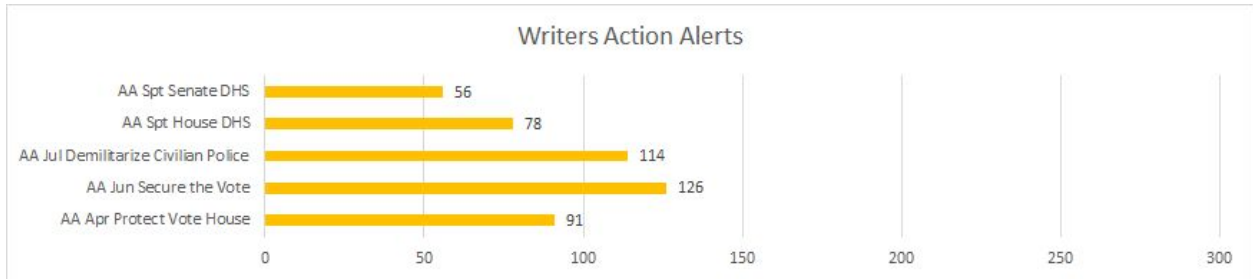
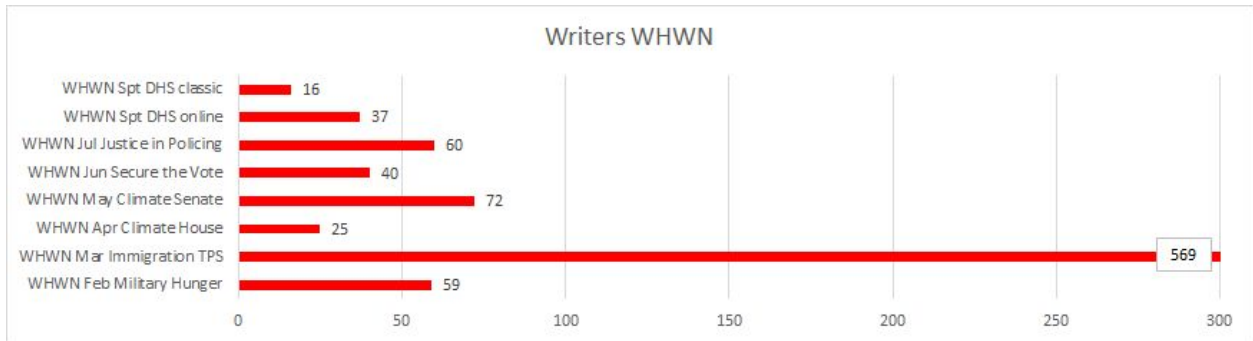
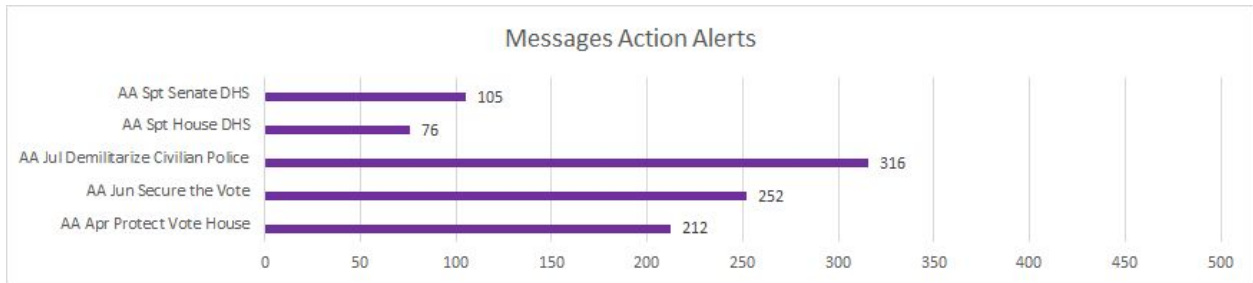
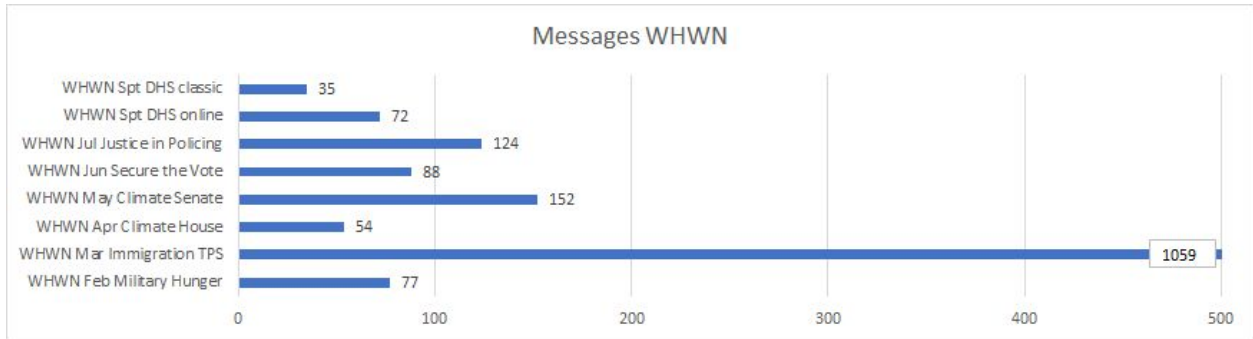
July 2020:

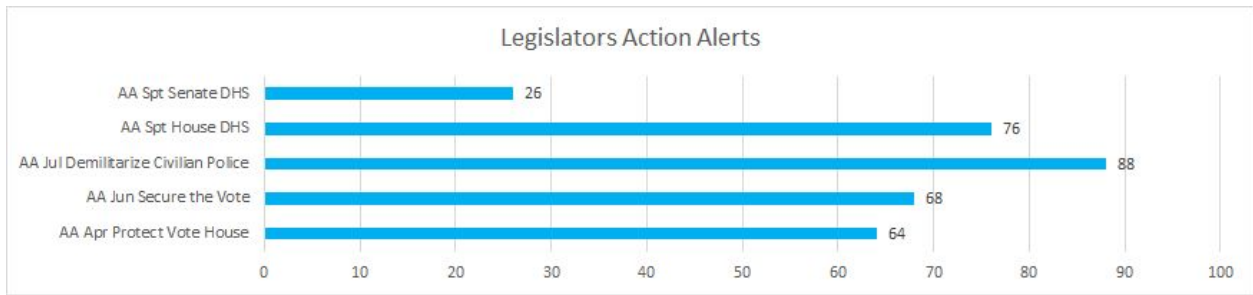
July's outing topic urged UU partner congregations to reach out to their Senators to take action on the **George Floyd Justice in Policing Act (S.3912)** using our WHWN classic format. The outing was dovetailed, or buttressed, by a popular AA to [Demilitarize Civilian Law Enforcement](#), urging Congress to co-sponsor and vote for amendments to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). The grounding for the AA was too many deaths of Black people at the hands of police, and weapons of war have no place in local communities.

Outing: Lavona Grow with assistance from others, including Rev. Karen Scrivo, former Board Member, who is now consulting for UUSJ as an editor developed the WHWN content.

Summary: The Congressional Black Caucus, passed the bill (H.R.7120) in the House and needed Senate consideration. UUSJ WHWN participants wrote letters, with powerful first-person accounts of people of color harmed from discrimination and brutality at the hands of police in their areas. While UU letters have already been submitted to writers' members of Congress, anyone can use UUSJ's background materials to continue the

pressure. ([July's WHWH Handout.](#))





	Messages	Writers	Legislators
WHWN Feb Military Hunger	77	59	14
WHWN Mar Immigration TPS	1059	569	33
WHWN Apr Climate House	54	25	15
WHWN May Climate Senate	152	72	20
WHWN Jun Secure the Vote	88	40	14
WHWN Jul Justice in Policing	124	60	15
WHWN Spt DHS online	72	37	20
WHWN Spt DHS classic	35	16	7
AA Apr Protect Vote House	212	91	64
AA Jun Secure the Vote	252	126	68
AA Jul Demilitarize Civilian Police	316	114	88
AA Spt House DHS	76	78	76
AA Spt Senate DHS	105	56	26
	2622	1343	460