



Immigration Action Team report to Board – June 2021

The past quarter of Immigration Action Team efforts has been focused on the June advocacy virtual meetings with the Senate offices related to immigration legislation. In March, we held an educational webinar telling the story of US Immigration law history, with over 100 signing up. In April, we held a town hall-style session including a number of activist partners, to identify which of our many policy priorities was the most urgent. We included a poll. This yielded the decision to focus – aligned with many partners – on seeking pathways to citizenship for essential workers who are undocumented. This is intended to incorporate the piecemeal legislation which had passed the house (for DACA and TPS holders plus farm workers), as well as other essential workers who have helped the US population survive during the pandemic, for a total of around five million. President Biden's big immigration reform bill does not seem to be going anywhere. Thus, activists have been pushing to include the pathways for citizenship as part of a likely reconciliation process to be used for the infrastructure and jobs initiative (assuming that a bipartisan approach to infrastructure is not achieved). Finally, we carried out a briefing in late May for advocacy corps and IAT members who will be joining the meetings. Two immigration experts presented their version of the above legislative objective – Rich Morales of Faith in Action and Giovana Oaxaca, of ELCA. By the time of the board meeting, we should have completed virtual meetings with over a dozen Senate offices. In addition to the WHWN letters we are asking for, UUSJ has also been putting out Action Alerts, first for the President's reform bill, and later for the DACA/TPS/Farmworkers legislation which is stuck in the Senate.

At the same time, we have been monitoring the Administration's efforts to restore some humanity and legality to the asylum and refugee systems, which is made some steady progress, but still is falling short of resolving the backlogs, rejections, detentions and deportations of people trying to come to America. We've signed onto petitions and letters by partners and cheered on the progress via UUSJ's social media and newsletters – such as restoration of refugee resettlement levels, closing of a couple of the worst-case detention centers, reuniting of separated children with their families, and processing of some of those waiting in Mexico, along with unaccompanied minors appearing at the US southern border.