

*Advancing just and equitable
federal policy - aligned with UU
values - through engagement,
education, and advocacy*

**Unitarian
Universalists
for Social Justice
Annual Report
2023-2024**

Table of Contents

Message from Board Chair	3
Executive Director's Note	4
Briefings and Programs	5
Witness and Amplification	14
Advocacy and Mobilization	20
Trustees and Testimonials	27
Financials and Contributions	35
About Us	38
Thank You	41



At UUSJ we hold ourselves accountable to...

Our Vision

A just, compassionate, and sustainable world community.

Our Mission

Advance equitable national policies and actions aligned with UU values through engagement, education, and advocacy.

Our Moral Owners

Unitarian Universalists, UU congregations, impacted communities, and the organizations that support them.

Our Values

We are effective and responsive

We are faithful to our UU Principles

We respect others

...we are building a **UU movement for federal advocacy** and we seek to create an unremitting UU presence in DC, we want to be **Advocates for Collective Liberation**.

[Support UUSJ - Donate Here](#)

Message from Rev. Peggy Clarke, Board Chair

Three years ago, the UUSJ Board broke out of being a local group representing area congregations to becoming a national Board, dramatically extending influence and diversifying leadership. That newly established governance team continued to support the four key advocacy areas that grounded UUSJ's work (democracy, immigration, environment, and economic justice), while also seeking to expand participation across the UU eco-system. With our reach now extending clear across the nation, we bring the 2023-2024 year to a close both joyful in our growth and confident in our ongoing success.

UUSJ's influence is increasing at just the right moment. Climate disruptions have become the norm, our immigration system is broken and desperate for renewal grounded in compassion, the income gap is widening exponentially, and, relatedly, democracy is under threat reminiscent of the 1850s. Our shared progressive values need a voice in the halls of power, and this year, UUSJ has been such a voice.

Through collaborative interfaith action, meetings with staffers, rallies, write-in campaigns, online educational forums, and UU partnerships, UUSJ is a hub of activity propelling the values of our faith forward. Between the lines of this annual report, you will see a renewed organization that has found its footing and is poised to be exactly what we need at this very moment in American history.

As the last of the members of that newly imagined board hand the baton to the next group, UUSJ is flourishing and ready for everything heading our way.



Pablo DeJesús, Executive Director's Note



I'm often asked where I find hope in the face of policy violence and legislative dysfunction—the fog and chaos this past year in the federal forum and this session of Congress. For me, I find hope in our congregations, individuals, and networks working for social justice. I'm proud of our volunteers work, particularly during these difficult times. I'm pleased with our collaborations.

With this annual report, we celebrate your commitment to democracy, immigration, the environment and climate, and economic justice. As Rev. Peggy suggests, we broke out of a local posture and continue to assume a national footing, and our time is now. That means you sided with voting rights, Afghans, child tax credits, a Faithful Farm Bill, Dreamers, and so much more.

Because of your support, we are the leading Unitarian Universalist organization in the U.S. focused on the domestic agenda, and we are volunteer-driven. Our witness and education have an impact. Together, we carry water in our advocacy. With your attention we've increased the number of our supporters and donors, continued briefings and programs, refined our witness and amplification, shown up in solidarity as allies, and made our advocacy and mobilization more responsive.

For this new program year, the work ahead remains significant. **The open question is: Will we be called to defend our values like never before, or will we have the opportunity to champion progress?** I don't know which vision for America will win the 2024 election, which principles will define our national policies or public and civic life. In contrast, I do know that we will care for racial, gender, and economic equity. We will cry out that people and the planet are one. We feel obligated to raise our voices for welcome, dignity, and compassion. We shall defend our democracy against authoritarianism and flirtations with fascism.

We are well positioned to fight the needed battles, contributing our portion to the collective work. And we can do more with your continued attention and support. Please know, we feel blessed to collaborate with you.



UUSJ

Briefings &

Programs

2023-2024

Advancing UU Values Through Education

June 25, 2024: At the Vanguard—Unitarian Universalists and End-of-Life Options ([Video](#))

Zeena Regis, Compassion & Choices delves into complex conversation surrounding end-of-life options. This discussion addresses systemic and persistent disparities and economic inequities in healthcare.

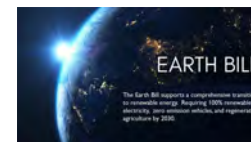


June 25, 2024: *Democracy's Crisis, and How it Ends* with Lawrence Lessig ([Video](#))

Co-sponsored with **Reclaim Our Democracy**. Harvard professor, lawyer, and political activist Lawrence Lessig presents his thoughts on how to protect our democracy at this critical time in history.

June 18, 2024: Expert Policy Briefing: Earth Bill with Robert Hogan ([Video](#))

Policy Briefing with Robert Hogan. The Earth Bill supports a comprehensive transition to renewable energy, requiring 100% renewable electricity, zero-emission vehicles, and regenerative agriculture by 2030.



April 16, 2024: What is the U.S. Climate Fair Share? ([Video](#))

Advancing Climate Justice by Increasing U.S. Domestic and International Commitments with Rev. Susannah Tuttle. Join this session for an introduction to the U.S. Climate Fair Share campaign, connecting values-based principles to policy recommendations.

April 4, 2024: **Keep Calling & Writing: How Climate Justice Movement Affects Federal Legislation**

[\(Video\)](#) Policy talk by Katie Thomas Carol, Esq., Director of Energy and Environment Programs for the Congressional Progressive Caucus Center. Katie speaks about the power UUs have to help drive the progressive agenda.

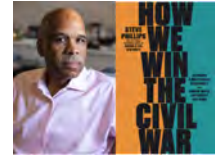


February 13, 2024: **Hopkins v. Watson: Challenging Lifetime Voting Bans** [\(Video\)](#)

UUSJ joined an amicus brief from a diverse coalition of faith groups—speaking to how such a harsh punishment contradicts values shared by all major faiths like forgiveness, mercy, redemption, and compassion.

February 6, 2024: **How We Win the Civil War: Multiracial Democracy and Ending White Supremacy**

[\(Video\)](#) Steve Phillips warns of the fight we're in to create a truly multiracial democracy and rid our politics of white supremacy, once and for all.



January 31, 2024: **Power to Heal: Medicare and the Civil Rights Revolution** [\(Video\)](#)

Compelling and largely unknown story of how civil rights activists joined forces with the federal government to use Medicare funds and the Civil Rights Act to compel America's segregated hospitals to open their doors to African Americans.

January 10, 2024: **Saving Democracy: User's Manual For Every American** with David Pepper [\(Video\)](#)

Author David Pepper will speak to Unitarian Universalists about how we can all play a more active and effective role in lifting democracy.



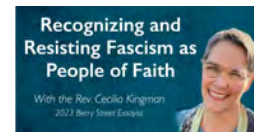


December 19, 2023: The PUPP Act ([Video](#))

The intersecting issues of homelessness and animal welfare. Did you know people experiencing homelessness are sometimes accompanied by a companion animal?

December 12, 2023: Recognizing & Resisting Fascism as People of Faith with Rev. Cecilia Kingman

([Video](#)) Many Unitarian Universalists have been very concerned with the real and present danger to our democracy and the rise of anti-democracy movements.



Sunday, November 5, 2023: Tyranny of the Minority ([Video](#))

Harvard professors Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt offer a coherent framework for understanding these volatile times

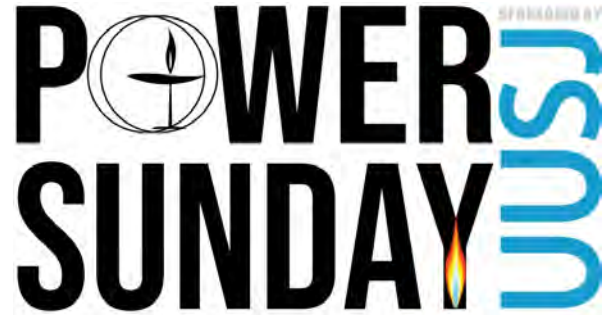
October 11, 2023: A Fascist Campaign in Full View ([Video](#))

Dale Anderson, UUSJ Trustee, a Floridian, will explore these issues, relate them to what is happening in Florida, and ask why UUs, democracy advocates, and the media continue to avoid using the “F-word.”



August 9, 2023: Expert Opinion Briefing: U.S. Supreme Court Ethics Reform with Brie Sparkman

([Video](#)) Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington. Learn more about the political and legislative landscape for ethics reforms focused on the U.S. Supreme Court. Discover what actions we as citizens and Unitarian Universalists can take to shape a healthy, inclusive democracy.



UUSJ launched a new program, asking congregations to help leverage our collective power at the federal level as a people of faith.

We observed, so many of us feel our democracy is in danger, and feel powerless. But we are not powerless; we all have meaningful ways to save our democratic system.

One way is to commit to being an active part of civil society, which means committing to our institutions. This includes our home churches and UUSJ as the forward-facing UU organization advocating for our values on Capitol Hill and Washington D.C. with federal decision-makers.

UUs Gather for Climate Advocacy in DC

In September, 2023, Unitarian Universalists came together in Washington, DC, to advocate for systemic changes in addressing the climate crisis. We used the farm bill as a vehicle for our advocacy conversations. We learned how farming and ranching can provide essential opportunities in addressing the climate crisis if we get the incentives and program structures to work in favor of what we want. We asked for conservation and climate-smart agriculture as well as equitable USDA programs.

We heard from experts in the field **Scott Faber**, Environmental Working Group; **Lloyd Wright**, United States Department of Agriculture (retired); **Joe Van Wye**, Farm Action; **Karyn Bigelow**, Creation Justice Ministries; and **Madison Mayhew**, Interfaith Power & Light.



We held a **Climate Friendly Farm Bill Worship Service** featuring Rev. “CT,” Carol Thomas Cissel, UU Congregation of Arlington, Virginia and hosted by Rev. Kelly Dignan of UU Ministry for Earth (UUMFE) .

For our day of advocacy, we were briefed by **Representative Chellie Pingree** (D-ME) at the U.S. Capitol Visitors center before UU constituents met with their Senate offices, Democrats and Republicans, many on the Senate Agriculture Committee, to advocate for a better, climate-smart, regenerative approach to the farm bill.

UUMFE movement chaplains helped put front and center our progressive faith-based values and principles in our conversations. As UUSJ advocates, we communicated our deep concern for the interdependent web of life. We shared our desire to see farmers offered the tools and programs needed to become partners in addressing the climate crisis. We shared that we see no division between people and the planet. **UUs for a Just Economic Community** convened this conference in partnership with UUMFE and UUSJ and with the kind support of **Side With Love** and the **UU Funding Program**.



Commentaries and Issue Coverage



[A Democracy If You Can Keep It](#)

Kenneth Mitchell, Maryland



[Environmental Justice: Using Our UU Principles as a Theological Guide](#)

Meleah Houseknecht, Minnesota



[Immigration Turmoil on the Hill and the Way Forward](#)

Sean McCarthy, Maryland



[Saving Our Democracy Why I Care](#)

Dee Ellison, Virginia



[New Year. New Goals](#)

Rev. Latifah Griffin, Florida



[Making Migrants Wait in Mexico is Not a Good Solution](#)

Steve Eckstrand, Maryland



[Our Country Needs Our Words and Values More Than Ever](#)

Fred Van Deusen, Massachusetts



[I Side with the People - They Do Not Have to Be My People](#)

Rev. Peggy Clarke, New York



[Farming for the Future: Systemic Changes for the Climate Crisis](#)

UUA President
Rev. Sofia Betancourt



[Five Questions, Climate Justice, and the US 2023 Federal Farm Bill](#)

Pablo DeJesus
UUSJ Executive Director



[Urgency on Voting Rights](#)

Jean Pierce, Oregon



[Living In Hope For Immigration Justice](#)

Dan Schneider, Ohio



UUSJ

**Witness &
Amplification
2023-2024**

Amplification: Events, Campaigns, Online Solidarity

As UUSJ continues to move further into coalition work, we are asked to participate in various efforts or to amplify campaigns.

Here is a sample of the many activities we supported with our solidarity, participation or amplification.

The list continues to be an impressive mix of webinars, events, and promotion of policy content, as well as witness, petitions, and other advocacy engagements.

We thank you for your attention.

June

Poor People's Campaign 2024
J.Lewis Day of Action, Promo

May

International Day of Biodiversity
Kiplinger Lecture
Housing Affordability Crisis
Battle of the Bills
CTC for Progress
Direct File Passed

April

Minority Rule, Ari Berman,
Congressional Reason Caucus
Dignity and Respect
#RespectImmigrants
Earth Month
Democracy Forward
SB4 Language Lab
Save Juliana
Beloved Community
Climate Fair Share
Outlaw Pollution
Black Maternal Health Week
Faith for Haiti
Direct File Awareness Push

March

#SaveJulianna,
Fair Representation Act
World Water Day
Hope Border
March for Human Dignity
UU the Vote 2024 Launch
Direct File
PPC at State Assemblies

February

Child Tax Cuts
Save Asylum Rally and Vigil
#WelcomeWithDignity
Defend Annunciation House
Uncounted Millions
Dreamers
Nat'l Immigrant Forum Letter

January

Energy Democracy
#SaveAsylum
CUUSAN
Child Poverty,
Equity
MLK Day
January 6th Vigil

December

Voter Suppression Toolkit
Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples
Small Donor Finance
UUs at COP 28 in Dubai; UUSC

November

Afghan Adjustment Thank You
#Souls2Enroll
Vigil for Migrant Deaths
Honoring Lives Taken by ICE/CBP
Diwali Celebrations
Child Poverty - Unacceptable
Hearts@Home, families reunited
Sowing Justice: a Just Farm Bill
Climate Resilience Hubs, UUA
Last ditch on loss and damage
Manna Matters: Food Security

October

AFL CIO - Nursing Comment
#LetAsylumSeekersWork, Launch
Child Tax Credit
Last Battlefield: The Vote in DC
Unique Role of Faith Communities
in Building a Culture of Democracy
#CareNotCuts: Avoid Shutdown

September

NYC March to End Fossil Fuels
DC rally to End Fossil Fuels
Value our Families
Justice for Part-Time Workers
Hanan's Rule on DACA
JRL Voter Rights Act, Push
Faithful Farm Bill
Operation Lonestar

August

Stop MVP
DACA AIIW
Rev. Abhi Janamanchi, PPC
March on Washington, 60yrs
People vs Fossil Fuels
Afghan Adjustment Act
NY Climate March
AIW Action 2023

July

Summer Bridge Pledge
Interfaith Farm Bill Petition
Root Causes of Migration
Environmental Law Rollbacks
Fascisms Without & Within
PPC, Biggest Hill Outing Ever



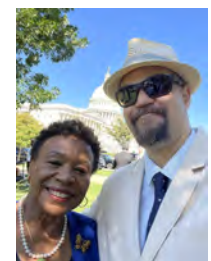
Signature Events: Ending Fossil Fuels, 2023

September 17, 2023: March To End Fossil Fuels, NYC

In the largest climate march since the pandemic started, thousands marched in New York City during September to demand President Biden take bold action to End Fossil Fuels. UUs gathered together with Rev. Peggy Clarke, our UUSJ Board Chair.

September 16, 2023: Rally To End Fossil Fuels, DC

In preparation for the march in New York City, Pablo DeJesus, our UUSJ Executive Director, gathered with other advocates to urge Members of Congress to press President Biden and pledge End Fossil Fuels.



Signature Events: Solidarity for Justice, 2023

September 15, 2023: National Day of Action: Demand Justice! #NoDetention #NoDeportation

The Biden administration has failed to live up to its promises of a more just and humane immigration system, and systemic abuses at the hands of ICE and CBP persists under Biden. UUSJ helped anchor the event in front of the White House.

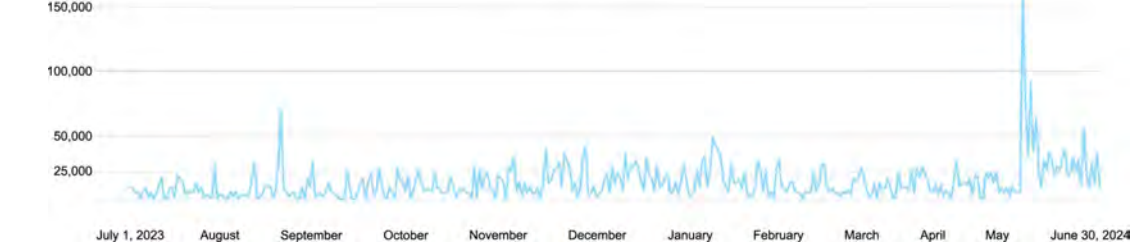
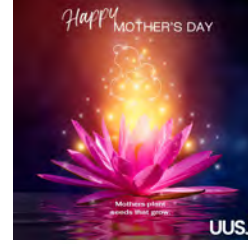
August 26, 2023: 60th Anniversary, March on Washington 2023

As the nation reckons with historic levels of violent hate crimes and threats to its democracy, we must continue the decades old fight for democracy, social justice, and civil rights.



[Support UUSJ - Donate Here](#)

Signature Social Media: Building Awareness and Showcasing Care





UUSJ

**Advocacy &
Mobilization
2023-2024**

UU Values Through Advocacy

2024 May [Confronting the Affordable Housing Crisis](#)

2024 May [The Fair Representation Act](#)

2024 March [Earth Bill 2024](#)

2024 March [Expand Child Tax Credit](#)

2024 February [Reparation Study & Proposals](#)

2024 February [John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement. Act](#)

2024 December [PUPP Act](#)

2023 November [Indigenous Peoples Day Reintroduced](#)

2023 September WHWN: [Climate Provisions in Farm Bill](#)

2023 July [Pass the Reintroduced the Afghan Adj. Act](#)

2023 July [Require Ethics Rules for Supreme Court](#)

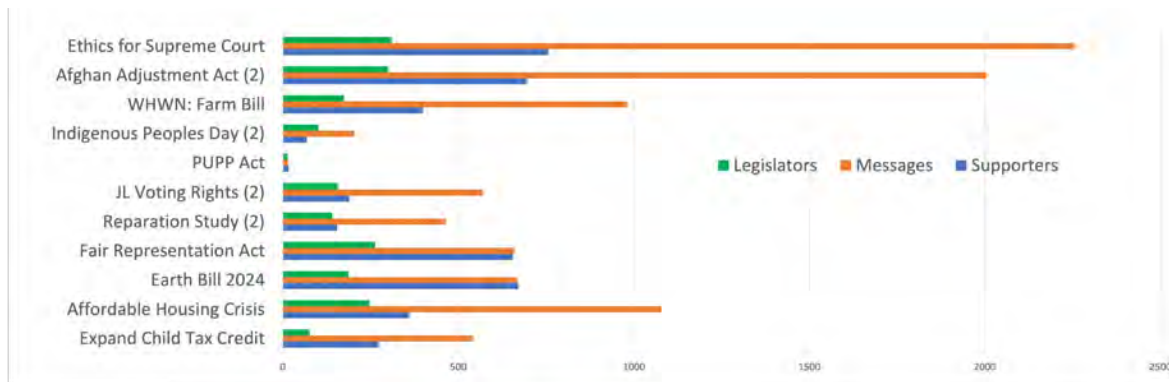
Continued from prior Program Year:

[Citizenship for Dreamers](#)

[SNAP in Farm Bill](#)

[Climate-Friendly Farm Bill](#)

[Environmental Justice for All Act](#)



Signature Policy Collaborations

We repeatedly declared our support for the vulnerable and the impacted.

We joined WISC organizations, representing people of faith across religious traditions and denominations pressing Congress, urging bipartisan action to keep the government operational or risk severe consequences for programs serving those in need.

We joined dozens of other organizations in the #LetAsylumSeekersWork (LASW) coalition (UUSJ is also a partner), when our immigration team became interested in expanding and expediting immigrants' access to work permits.



**EVACUATE
OUR
ALLIES**

As part of the welcome UUs showed in 2021, with the fall of Kabul, we continued to support Afghan adjustment, honoring the pledges made by Veterans to allies.



We supported free tax filing, as a matter of economic justice.



We helped plan the UU Climate Justice Revival.



We were steadfast in our support of the Child Tax Credit and ending Child Poverty.

[Support UUSJ - Donate Here](#)

Movement Building



- What is the **Democracy Movement?**
- Why do we need a Democracy Movement?
([presentation and video](#))
- Personal Plan **Checklist**
- **Democracy Resources**
- Get Out the Vote (GOTV) **Activities and Events**

To support UU congregation democracy and voting efforts, our UUSJ Democracy Action Team has built a portal for 2024 to help build a powerful pro-democracy movement.

The portal includes many resources to help jumpstart the democracy focused engagement of congregations.

Review the Online Information



[Support UUSJ - Donate Here](#)

Amici Curiae

We joined an amici for [Hopkins v. Watson](#), looking to confront the practice of lifetime voting bans as cruel and unusual punishment.

We joined an amici in defense of [DACA](#) and the Dreamers included under the program.

We joined an amici for [Hart v. Florida](#), to push back on charging people for registering and voting while ineligible, even though people honestly – if mistakenly – believed they were eligible.



IN THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT

DENNIS HOPKINS, *individually and on behalf of a class of all others similarly situated*; HERMAN PARKER, JR., *individually and on behalf of a class of all others similarly situated*; WALTER WAYNE KUHIN, JR., *individually and on behalf of a class of all others similarly situated*; BRYON DEMOND COLEMAN, *individually and on behalf of a class of all others similarly situated*; JON O'NEAL, *individually and on behalf of a class of all others similarly situated*; EARNEST WILLHITE, *individually and on behalf of a class of all others similarly situated*,
Plaintiffs-Appellees.

v.

SECRETARY OF STATE MICHAEL WATSON, *in his official capacity*,
Defendant-Appellant.

CONSOLIDATED WITH
Case No. 19-60678

DENNIS HOPKINS, *individually and on behalf of a class of all others similarly situated*; HERMAN PARKER, JR., *individually and on behalf of a class of all others similarly situated*; WALTER WAYNE KUHIN, JR., *individually and on behalf of a class of all others similarly situated*; JON O'NEAL, *individually and on behalf of a class of all others similarly situated*; EARNEST WILLHITE, *individually and on behalf of a class of all others similarly situated*; BRYON DEMOND COLEMAN, *individually and on behalf of a class of all others similarly situated*,
Plaintiffs-Appellees Cross-Appellants.

v.

SECRETARY OF STATE MICHAEL WATSON, *in his official capacity*,
Defendant-Appellant Cross-Appellee.

On Appeal from the United States District Court
for the Southern District of Mississippi, No. 3:18-CV-188

EN BANC BRIEF OF AMICI CURIAE

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF APPEAL SECOND DISTRICT, STATE OF FLORIDA

NATHAN SHIRL HART,
Defendant/Appellant,

v.

STATE OF FLORIDA,
Plaintiff/Appellee.

Case No. 2D23-0493
L.T. Case No. 22-CF-011041

ON APPEAL FROM A FINAL CRIMINAL JUDGMENT AND
SENTENCE OF THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR THE
THIRTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND FOR
HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY, FLORIDA

**BRIEF OF AMICI CURIAE FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS AND
RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN SUPPORT OF APPELLANT**

No. 23-40653

IN THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT

State of Texas; State of Alabama; State of Arkansas; State of Louisiana; State of
Nebraska; State of South Carolina; State of West Virginia; State of Kansas; State of
Mississippi,

Plaintiffs – Appellees.

v.
United States of America; Alejandro Mayorkas, Secretary, U.S. Department of
Homeland Security; Troy Miller, Senior Official Performing the Duties of the
Commissioner, U.S. Customs and Border Protection; Patrick J. Lechleitner, Acting
Director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement; Ur M. Jaddou, Director of U.S.
Citizenship and Immigration Services; Jason D. Owens, Chief of the U.S. Border Patrol,
Defendants – Appellants,

Maria Rocha; José Magaña-Salgado; Nanci J. Palacios Godínez; Elly Marisol Estrada;
Karina Ruiz de Diaz; Carlos Aguilar González; Luis A. Rafael; Darwin Velásquez; Jin
Park; Óscar Álvarez; Denise Romero; Jung Woo Kim; Ángel Silva; Hyo-Won Jeon;
Elizabeth Diaz; Blanca González; Moses Kamau Chege; Maria Diaz,
Intervenor Defendants – Appellants,

State of New Jersey,

Intervenor – Appellant.

On Appeal from the United States District Court for the
Southern District of Texas, Brownsville Division, No. 1:18-CV-68

BRIEF OF UNITED WE DREAM AND 116 ORGANIZATIONS AS
AMICI CURIAE IN SUPPORT OF DEFENDANTS-APPELLANTS IN SUPPORT

Screenshot: RSAL

Public Comments

When the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) considered a historic new rule that would establish a [minimum staffing standard in nursing homes for the first time](#), we mobilized for public comments on this proposed rule. For us it was a matter of economic justice and good health industry policy.

As the country pivoted to a consequential election, political forces ramped up use of immigration issues to stir up their base voters rather than passing legislation to solve important challenges. While most helpful legislation was stalled, certain issues were being approached through administrative actions—some to good effect, others less so.

We made public comments in support of immigrants.



We opposed a proposal to allow asylum officers to consider [“bars” to asylum during fear screenings](#). We felt this would make the asylum process more arbitrary and complex than it currently is. We defended a fair system.

We came out in support of a rule automatically extending the [Employment Authorization Documents \(EAD\) period](#) for certain renewal applicants from 180 days to 540 days or longer. Complicated work authorization rules make it hard for migrants, to obtain jobs to support their families (and help build our economy). Whether they are Afghan ally refugees, asylum seekers, Dreamers, or others, we care!

Coalition Solidarity



Creating Hubs of Climate Resilience with Federal Clean Energy Funding

NOVEMBER 9
4 PT / 5 MT / 6 CT / 7 ET

CREATE CLIMATE JUSTICE | Generate Cities | EESI | APEN | UUSJ | JUST SOLUTIONS Collective | JUSTICE FOR AMERICA | CLIMATE JUSTICE | U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY | UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



USDA
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Putting Healthy Food Within Reach

world water day
Water is Life
March 21, 2024
Join us on Zoom!



FILE YOUR TAXES FOR FREE



Tell Biden to close the #FirstTen immigrant detention centers!

STOP WORK UNTIL SAFETY STANDARDS ARE MET

TAKE ACTION

Secure a historic climate win in Alaska





UUSJ

**Trustees &
Testimonials
2023-2024**

2023-24 Board Of Trustees

Dale Anderson, Sarasota, FL - Dale is a retired physician, executive, and healthcare consultant who served as the President of UU Church of Sarasota. He was instrumental in instituting a Racial Justice Reading Program and created the Racial Justice Coordinating Team. Dale lives with his wife, Mary and has three grown children and grandchildren. [[Full Bio](#)]



Rev. Peggy Clarke, New York - Senior Minister, the Community Church of NY. Peggy was on the team that wrote Ethical Eating: Statement of Conscience. She was a witness at Standing Rock, marched to free refugees at the Mexican border, and organized UU involvement in the Climate Strike. Peggy is a founding board member for the NY State Advocacy Network. [[Full Bio](#)]



Rev. Latifah Griffin, Palm Beach, FL - Rev. Griffin was raised in Chester, PA, and works as a therapist and minister. Latifah began her ministry with UU Palm Beaches in 2023; she is the first openly queer woman and the first woman of color to serve the congregation. She enjoys relaxing, spending time with her family, reading, learning new things, and trying new foods. [[Full Bio](#)]



Vonna Heaton, Rockville, MD - Vonna is a passionate and lifelong student and practitioner of UU principles. She became a UU and joined River Road UU in 2013 and proceeded to put her energy and passion to use by serving with several racial justice groups. Vonna also serves on the Board of a non-profit that is reshaping the local food system. [[Full Bio](#)]



Meleah Houseknecht, Minneapolis, MN - Meleah is the founder of Emergence Consulting, which provides capacity building to nonprofit clients. Meleah holds a master's degree in environmental management from the Yale School and has 20 years of experience engaging stakeholders in environmental policy. In 2021, she began following her call to ministry. [[Full Bio](#)]



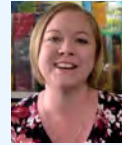
Chloe Emily Ockey, Rockville, MD - Chloe moved to Maryland from California and serves the UU Congregation of Rockville as Director of Communications. Her passion is bringing awareness to social justice issues through creative means. Chloe earned her Associate in the Spring of 2018 and has been immersed in climate justice and Young Adult program development. [[Full Bio](#)]



Jean Pierce, Portland, OR - Jean has been active in social justice in a variety of capacities and in 2008 retired as professor of educational psychology. She served as chair of the League of Women Voters of Illinois Issues and Advocacy Committee. Jean recently moved to Portland where she has continued her justice work with fellow UUs and League members. [\[Full Bio\]](#)



Rev. Kristin Schmidt, Olney, MD - Rev. Kristin grew up in Silver Spring, MD and attended Cedar Lane UU Church. She earned a Master of Divinity from Wesley Theological Seminary. Since graduating, she has served congregations in Massachusetts, New Jersey, California, and now the UU Church of Silver Spring. She lives with her husband and four boys in Olney, Maryland. [\[Full Bio\]](#)



Dan Schneider, Cincinnati, OH - Dan grew up on a farm in Ohio and was the first person in his family to attend college. Dan served in Vietnam, taught history, and was Director at the Univ. of Cincinnati Clermont College. Dan and his wife attend the First Unitarian Church of Cincinnati where he has served on the social justice committee and Board of Trustees. [\[Full Bio\]](#)



Mariano J. Vera, Sarasota, FL - Mariano is a Manatee UU member in Bradenton, Florida, where he chairs the social justice committee. He produces a Latino radio show, and has belonged to Argentine social justice communities, Mariano grew up with Jesuit priests who emphasized social concern for the poor and political liberation for oppressed people. [\[Full Bio\]](#)



Sandra Wilmore, Springfield, VA - Sandy grew up in the segregated South where she was informed by a sense of justice and her deep respect for the power of the law—Sandra's profession. For ten years Sandy was an attorney with a civil rights firm in DC and prior to that was an attorney in the Bureau of Consumer Protection, Federal Trade Commission for thirty-two years. [\[Full Bio\]](#)



2024 - 2025 Nominating Committee



Rev. Katie Romano Griffin roots her ministry in the belief that each person is inherently good and worthy of love. Katie currently serves All Souls Indy, Indianapolis, IN.



Reverend E.N. Hill is an Air Force veteran, social justice activist, spoken word artist, and Unitarian Universalist minister. He currently serves as at UU Church of Tallahassee, TN.



Heather Vickery is the Coordinator for Congregational Activism at the UU Service Committee. Heather is an active member of First Parish Malden, MA.

Incoming Trustees, 2024 - 2025 Cohort

Teresa DeSousa, West Orange, NJ - Teresa became a Unitarian Universalist in 2003 and is a member of the UU Congregation in Montclair, NJ. She has served her congregation, first in governance and most recently, in the social justice area. In 2016, she led the effort to revitalize her congregation's social justice ministry, serving as co-facilitator of the congregation's Social Justice Coalition.



Patricia Marr, Lakewood, CA - Pat has been a member of the UU Church of Long Beach (JUCLB) for 30+ years. She is passionate about voting rights, election integrity, and democracy legislation, and she knows voting rights are the foundation on which we stand to accomplish all our social justice goals. Pat is also serving on the board of the Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry of California.



Kim Rebecca-Murray, Parker, CO - Kim and her husband, an art activist, attend Prairie Unitarian Universalist Church in Parker, Colorado, where she has served as co-chair of the social justice committee, board secretary, and board president. Kim led several activist initiatives, including representation at the Women's March, the March for Our Lives, and countless demonstrations in the summer of 2020 in response to the murders of George Floyd and Elijah McClain.



Eliseo Santana Jr., Clearwater, FL - Eliseo has been a UU Clearwater Social Justice Council member for over 20 years (even before becoming a congregation member). His advocacy, witnessing, lobbying, and organizing for social justice have been on numerous issues. One of his UU community passions is to help make our faith more culturally welcoming to non-traditional UU populations. This flows from his professional experience, usually and often the first and only person of color in the room.



Support From Allies

Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice gives me hope!

As the remarkable Rev. Otis Moss III often preaches, “We are in a struggle to build the United States yet to be.”

When we bring our Unitarian Universalist values—justice, equity, compassion—into the offices and corridors of legislative power in Washington, D.C., through action alerts, conferences, phone banking, postcards, and letter writing, we are working to close the gap between our dreams and our reality. Through our work, we affirm that democracy is sacred.

UUSJ empowers Unitarian Universalists to be strong and effective advocates for essential climate justice legislation, the rights of Dreamers, organized labor, and a healthy democracy.

I, perhaps like you, am inspired – and empowered – through the action, advocacy, and understanding that comes from this amazing ministry.



Rev. Daniel Lawlor (he/him)
Minister, UU Congregation
of the Hudson Valley

[See More Testimonials](#)

Board Testimonials



Dan Schneider - I believe that UUSJ provides a clear, consistent voice for Unitarian Universalist values in our nation as we face crises of democracy, economic inequity, environmental devastation, and unjust treatment of immigrants.

[\[Read full testimonial\]](#)



Sandra Wilmore - I consider it a special gift to be part of an organization such as UUSJ, which brings together people of like minds and similar values and whose mission is directing them toward the practical application of those values.

[\[Read full testimonial\]](#)



Jean Pierce - With your support, we can continue to make our voices heard, telling the broader community that: we cannot take our democracy for granted; we must recognize the worth and dignity of immigrants.

[\[Read full testimonial\]](#)



Rev. Peggy Clarke - As I write, the House is leading only in chaos. It's been a whirlwind of activity over these last few years. UUSJ is our advocate, our assurance that shared values are being spoken and heard in the halls of power.

[\[Read full testimonial\]](#)



Dale Anderson - I see an opportunity for UUSJ to play an essential part in the coming defense of our democracy. I envision groups across the nation organizing to defend our democracy. To do so, we will need the support of UU members. [\[Read full testimonial\]](#)



Meleah Houseknecht - My UU faith teaches me that I can make a difference, that I choose how I will impact the world in ways big and small, and that it starts with relationships--coming together through organizations like UUSJ to act.

[\[Read full testimonial\]](#)



Mariano Vera - Since 2000, our voice has been present in solidarity at rallies and providing opportunities for education on policy issues. Since 2010, our voice has become more focused on the halls of power and how we can engage decision-makers. [\[Read full testimonial\]](#)



Rev. Kristin Schmidt - If I've learned anything in a lifetime as a Unitarian Universalist and 14 years of ministry, it's that we leverage far more power together than we do apart. I'm proud to be part of this important work. [\[Read full testimonial\]](#)

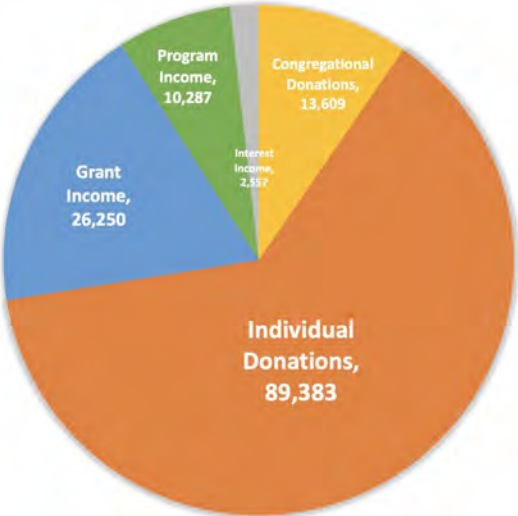


UUSJ

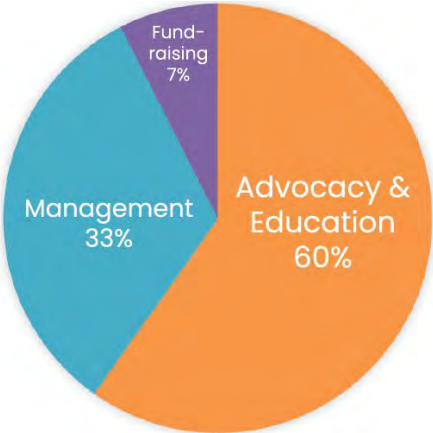
**Financials &
Contributions
2023-2024**

Financials

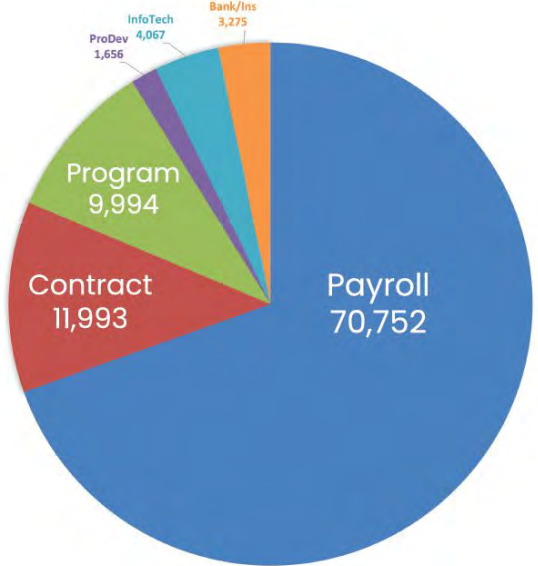
Income \$142,086



Expenses \$101,737



Program Expenses \$60,805



Our Democracy Defenders, 2024

Roberta Adams
Laurie Albright
William Alsmeyer-Johnson
Carol Antoniewicz
Paul Arfin
Kirk Ballin
Emily Beals
Richard Behan
Altheia Biaterana
MarieJo Binet
Martha Bishop
Hope Black
Saundra Boyd
Ronald Brandt
Bob Britton
Nancy Brown
Lynn Buffington
Evelyn Bradley for Fredrik Gilkey
Cecilia Cosca
Mary Cummings
Deb Dagavarian-Bonar
Pamela DiLamore
Marjory Donn
Joyce Dowling
Dee Ellison
Judith Erickson
Marie Evans
Jack Finkenberg
Richard Fish

Peter Fontneau
Nan Foster
Cindy Fountain
Carolynn Fowler-Smith
Leanne Friedman
John Gubbings
Grace Hall
Janice Harrison
Molly Hauck
Gail Hecky
William Heier
Laura and Mike Hodge
Kathryn and Mike Jens-Rochow
Bob Johnsen
Chris Johnson
Mary Jones
George Kanuck
John Keevert
Sharon Kennedy
Debbie Kerrigan
Emily Koechlin
Kubien, LLC
Siri Laurin
Rosalie Lijinsky
Allan Lindrup
Carol Loscalzo
Carol McDaniel
Dave and Deb McLaughlin
Suzanne Miller

Laurie Miller
Karen Miller
Joan Pelc
Mary Jane Pelletier
Susan Peters
John Pietras and Nancy Choice
Joyce Pollack
Barry Portugal
Darryl Ray
Kim Rebecca-Murray
Elizabeth Ritchie
Gregory Rosasco
Valerie Schmid-Sadwin
Lois Schmidt
Priscilla Schmitt
Ken Shilling and Karen Lee
Shilling
David Shontz
Karen Skold
James and Joanne Smoker
Dorothy Solbrig
Katherine Stevenson
Carrie Tilton-Jones
Colby Tippins
Jane Vansant
Gary Walker
Suzanne Wall
Cathy Wolff
Karen and Rob Zimmerman

2023-2024 Donors

Adams, Shirley	Butler, Pat	Dempsey, James	Gauley, Marjorie Loring	Hybl, Lois	Leeper, Mardys
Ades, Martha	Caldiero, James	Denniston, Bob	Gibbons, John	Isham, Sally	Lennon, Kelly
Akiba, Lorraine	Campbell, Carla	Devlin-Foltz, Betsy	Gilkey, Fred	Jacob, Evelyn	LePome, Penelope
Alcorn, Susan	Campbell, Peter	DeWitt, Jane	Giordano, Tony	Jahoda, Keith	Lewis, Sylvia
Almaguer, Julia	Capuano, Thomas	Dimond, Margery	Godt, Pamela	Jay, Kay	Lighthall, Fred
Alonzo, Virginia	Carpenter, Terry	Dudek, Mary	Goebel, Judith	Johnson, Alan	Limb, John
Andersen, Harry	Castiglia, Mary	Dugan, Richard	Gormley, Catherine	Johnston, Neele	Little, Deborah
Andersen, Dale	Caughlin, Maryanne	Dwire, Janet	Graham, B	Jones, Leo	Lorentzen, Grace
Anderson, Rev. Meredith	Chastain, Suzan	Eckart, Jeff	Greer, Sacha	Jones, Joan	Lowman, Terry
Asche, Jane	Chery, Donald	Eckert, Catherine	Grogan, Terry	Jones, Rev. Roger	Ludden, David
Aslakson, Jean	Chessler, Barbara	Eckstrand, Stephen	Grubman, Cathy & Stewart	Jones-Carroll, Charlotte	Macrae, Susie
Atlas, Seth	Clayton, Marilyn	Ehlers, Camille	Guffey, Jan	Kachuba, John	Magnuson, Gary
Bangs, Pat	Clutter, Barbara	Eldritch, Eric	Gugan, Robin	Kane, William	Maranville, Deborah
Bannor, Jane	Coeyman, Barbara	Ellis, Laura	Hanson, Donald	Kanitz, Connie	Marks, Patricia
Barr, Terrie	Collins, Patrick	Ellison, Dee	Hardin, Brad	Kapp, Gloria	Marlin, Doris
Barron, Karen	Collins, Emmy	Ensworth, Laurie	Harris, Bill	Kappler, Denise	Marr, Patricia
Baykun, Elyte	Connor, Katherine	Ernstthal, Mary Lynn	Harrison, Howard	Karlsen, Pat	Matheson, Ellen
Bayly, Rachel	Coonley, Philip	Espinosa, Elena	Harvat, Beth	Kehl, Jacqueline	Mattlage, Rodger
Beckman, Michael	Cosgrove, Kathleen	Evans, Dee	Hatcher, Kenneth	Kennelty-Cohen, Sharon	Maxwell, Rachel
Behenna, Patricia	Coury, Michael	Faithfull, Lucia	Hayes, Lisa	Kirkman, Jana	McCarthy, Sean
Belanger, Dian	Cramer, Rebeca	Farris, Matt	Heaton, Vonna	Klimczak, Cornelia	McCluskey, Marne
Bennett, Susan	Creel, Sarah	Fenton, Chuck	Hein, Lora	Kluczycki, Mary	McCord, Michael
Bennett Steury, Rachel	Crump, Deborah	Ferrell, Louise	Herbert, Emily	Kortsch, Karen	McClintock, Molly
Bishop, Peter	Culhane, Carol Fern	Ferris, Gretchen	Heusner, Patricia	Kowal, Tom	McGuire, Deb
Bluemel, Lee	Culp, David & Katy	Fleig, Gordon	Heyn, Moshe	Kraus, Tim	McKenna, Andy
Borrer, Kristina	D'Angelo, Georganne	Foster, Richard	Hilke, John & DD	Kringer, Ed	McKenzie, Leslie
Boyd, Gayle	Daffron, Ellen	Friedman, Lisa	Hoffmann, Frances	Kvaal, Martha	McLaine, Warren
Boyd, Katy	Dalton, Sara	Fultz, Florence	Hooper, Penny	LaForce, Melanie	McMullen, Audrey
Brauch, William	Darling, Jean	Funk, Nancy	Hostetler, James	Lanham, Ricky	McReynolds, Jamie
Brown, Wostan	DaSilva Jain, Katherine	Gadol, Louis	Houseknecht, Meleah	LaPrad, Jeannine	McTigue, Arthur
Buckley, Diane	Davis, Shirley	Gamblee, Jeff	Huffner, Laurie	Lawlor, Rev Daniel	Mellen, Julie
Buehring, Barbara	DeJesus, Pablo	Garcia-Sampson, Lisa	Hughes, Michael	Lazaruk, John	Melton, J
Bullaughay, Wayne	Demlo, Linda	Garrison, Nancy	Hunter, Peg	Lebowitz, Jacob	Mercado, Cecile

Merriman, Art
Meslin, Jan
Michael, David
Miller, Suzanne
Milner, Melanie
Mitchell, Ken
Moore, Barbara
Morn, Mary Katherine
Morse, Bob
Moxley, Nancy
Muntz, Kindra
Murtey, Kathleen
Musson, Arthur
Nahas, Betsy
Navarro, Sandra
Neiss, Charlie
Newhouse, William
Newman, Marianne
Nittler, Lynne
Nobel, Barry
Norris, Jim
O'Hagan, Jennifer
O'Connor, Patty
Olson, David Carl
OMeara, Maureen
Outcalt, Russell
Page, Tovis
Page, Patty
Paolini, Rod
Pappas, Nancy
Parcelli, Christine
Parks, Rita
Pearce, Annette
Perkins, William
Petersberger, Ralph
Peterson, John

Petrarca, William
Phillips, Charlotte
Pierce, Jean
Pierce, Daniel
Pierce, Maryellen
Pietras, John
Piez, Eleanor
Pilette, Sterling
Pohl-Kosbau, Leslie
Porth, Suzy
Potter, Dale
Powell, Heidi
Prandi, Julie
Prange, Elizabeth
Pyron, Amanda
Ramirez, Cheryle-May
Ramirez, Jon
Ramsden, Lindi
Ratta, Gregory
Realini, Jan
Reid, Rebecca
Reisch, Kimi Floyd
Richard, Richard
Richards, Mark
Richards, Mary
Rider, Barb
Rieder, Bruce
Rigano, Julie
Riley, Anne
Robinson, Penny
Robison, Judith
Rock, Kenneth
Rogers, Laura
Rohe, Shelly
Rokosky, Joanne
Root, Jane

Rosenberger, Tara
Routhier, Scott
Row, Constance
Rowe, Kari
Rowe, Loretta
Rubin, Paul
Rude, Carolyn
Ruedi, Gayle
Rush, Barbara
Rydstrom, Gunnel
Sacksteder, Mary
Sadegh, Judith
Salza, Dell
Sapirman, Nadine
Saunders, Daniel
Schaeffer, Peggy
Schatzman, Mary
Scheidt, Donna
Schmidt, Kristin
Schmitz, Joseph
Schneider, Dan
Schwartz, Rick
Scott, Ursula
Seaman, Jacquelyn
Seiffert, Perry & Dianne
Shabel, Elizabeth
Shaffer, Judy
Shaklee, Margaret
Shawn, Nikki
Shepard, Elizabeth
Sherman, Peggy
Shick, Stephen
Shields, Robert
Shields, Diane
Shilling, Ken
Shilton, David

Shoemaker, Cathy
Shryock, Robert
Michael
Sloan, Candice
Smith, Nancy
Smith, Darien
Snell, Stephen
Soderholm, Sidney
Sokal, David
Sommer, Cynthia
Springer, Donna
Stableford, Christina
Stayton, Kathy
Steele, Karen
Steele, David
Stettner, Judy
Stevens, Craig
Stratton, Gail
Strauss, David
Sullivan, Frances
Sullivan, Robert
Sutliff, Doris
Tasker, Peter
Taylor, Beverly
Thayer, Susan
Thompson, Karen
Thoryn, Michael
Tice, Patricia
Tortelli, Nina
Townsend, Rita
Trevithick, John
Troiano, David
Tugendhat, Marcia
Underwood, Larry
Ungar, Arthur

Urban, Elizabeth Joan
Urse, Steve
Utter, Lisa
Van Brunt, Terry
Van Deusen, Fred
Van Epps, Carrie
Vandiver, Rev. Deanna
Vera, Mariano
Walker, Sylvia
Walker, Darcy
Wanderer, Dean
Wasserman, Adam
Waterhouse, Dell
Waters, Diana
Wayt, Merritt
Weiman, Dave
Welch, Diana
Wellington, Patricia
West, Harper
White, Marsha
Whitley, John
Whitman, Carol
Wild, Jesse
Wilmer, Debra
Wilmore, Sandra
Wilson, Karen
Woodbury, Carolyn
Woolhouse, John
Wray, Tanner
Wunderlich, Elaine
Yost, Rev. Connie
Zellmer, Rev. Charlene Belsom
Zilber, Suzanne

Congregations

Accotink UU Church
All Souls Unitarian
Bull Run UUs
Cedar Lane UU Church
Edmonds UU Congregation
First Unitarian Church of Baltimore
First UUC of the Palm Beaches
High Plains UU
Manatee UU Fellowship
UU Meeting South Berkshire
Mount Vernon Unitarian Church
River Road UU Congregation
Unitarian Society of Ridgewood NJ
UU Church in Reston
UU Church of Arlington
UU Church of Silver Spring
UU Congregation of Columbia
UU Congregation of Rockville
UU Fellowship of Hendersonville
UU Congregation Las Cruces

[Support UUSJ - Donate Here](#)



UUSJ

About Us

2023-2024

Brief History of UUSJ

In 1998 Jack Edmondson, Executive Director of Open Door Housing, a UU organization, asked UUA President Rev. John Buehrens to explore the formation in DC of a coalition similar to the historic Urban Ministry in Boston.

After initial discussions, Rev. Buehrens embraced the idea and funded an organizer and consultant, Bob Johnsen, to develop the vision. Bob is a UU.

They were animated by the idea of “a loud, unified voice on public policy issues” with an eye for activism.



Jack Edmondson



Rev. John Buehrens



Bob Johnsen

After conducting more than 30 meetings with area ministers and UU leaders, Bob convened an organizing meeting in 1999, and 20 UU organizations agreed to form the Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice (UUSJ) looking to implement a big vision.

Incorporated – to do “big things” in April 2000.

Rev. Fritts, then Senior Minister at Cedar Lane UU Church, Maryland convened an organizing meeting to start implementation of the decision to see UUSJ formed.



Rev. Roger Fritts

Since its inception, UUSJ has been educating about advocacy. We bring together lay leaders to sharpen their skills, network and share best practices. We brief on issues of moral concern and build fellowship around such concerns. We mobilize in support of policies that reflect our UU values, principles, and world view. We provide opportunities for witness, activism, and direct federal advocacy.

In recent years we are strengthening strategic collaborations, leaning into coalition work and continuing to build a movement for UU Federal Advocacy. Now more than ever, we are focused on building our power and sharing that power with the impacted and the vulnerable.

We are striving to be **Advocates for [Collective Liberation](#)**. We invite you to support and join our movement.

UUSJ Staff and Contractors



Pablo DeJesús

- Worked for two Governors
- Advocated before Congress
- Worked on issue campaigns
- Government Affairs, Policy, Advocacy work
- Relationships and programs
- Administration and donors
- Super Volunteer coordination



Paulette DeMers

- Worked for UUM Ministry for Earth
- Graphic design experience
- 30+ years administrative experience
- Bookkeeping, database and donor correspondence
- Website maintenance and management



Ashley Egan

- Previous contract work with UUSJ
- Also staff with UU Legislative Ministry of Maryland
- Social Media work
- Well connected in DMV
- Leverages policy work from UULM MD




Anna Hooker

- Started as a grad student, now a school teacher
- Works on a project basis
- Advocacy Coordination
- Interaction with Hill offices
- Volunteer engagement



Jennifer Richardson

- Organizer for our UUSJ/Reeb project in DC-MD-VA
- Also works with the United Church of Christ
- DMV Voter Mobilization
- Engagement coordination
- Volunteer interactions and training



*Advancing just and equitable
federal policy - aligned with UU
values - through engagement,
education, and advocacy*

Thank You

Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice

7750 16th Street NW

Washington, DC 20012

202-600-9132 | info@uusj.org

UUSJ.org

[Support UUSJ - Donate Here](#)