



# NETWORK CONNECTION

FOURTH QUARTER 2019

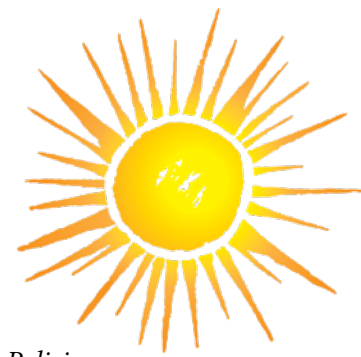
## PUTTING WORKERS BEFORE PROFITS

Prioritizing Families and Human Dignity in the Workplace





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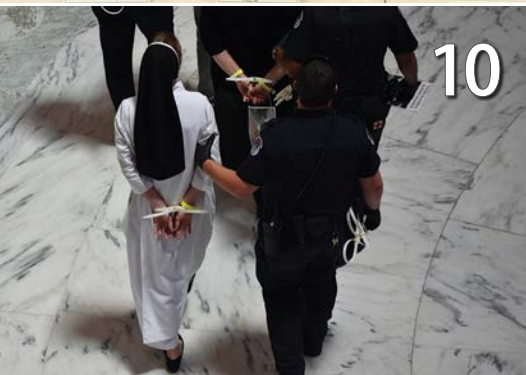
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## JOIN NETWORK TO CELEBRATE GIVING TUESDAY

As we approach the holiday season, consider supporting NETWORK on Giving Tuesday — a global day of giving following Thanksgiving, Black Friday, and Cyber Monday. This year, nonprofit organizations around the world will celebrate Giving Tuesday on Tuesday, December 3. We appreciate your support on Giving Tuesday and throughout the year!

## ON THE COVER

Sisters kick off the 2018 Nuns on the Bus trip with a visit to the Homeboy Industries bakery in Los Angeles, California.  
Photo by: Colleen Ross, NETWORK Lobby

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# Prioritizing Workers and Families

## Our Values Call for Business to Promote Fair, Inclusive Policies

SISTER SIMONE CAMPBELL, SSS

When I speak and write, I often feel as if I am envisioning a far off day when we will have moved closer to a just society where all benefit. In the midst of the Trump era, I am often frustrated at the hurtful, crass, and misguided statements and actions coming from this administration. Sometimes I just want to go hide!

However, in the midst of so much chaos, some good things are happening! Have you noticed?

This past August, the Business Roundtable, an organization of more than 200 top businesses in the country, publicly announced a new set of objectives. After a quarter of a century of businesses prioritizing their shareholders above all else, members of the Business Roundtable changed their tune! 181 CEOs signed a statement declaring that the goal of business is not only making money for shareholders, but instead that businesses owe a duty to customers, employees, suppliers, communities, AND shareholders.

I know that such a statement is not going to change the culture of our nation immediately, but it is a start.

Back in 2014, NETWORK held a variety of roundtable conversations with business leaders. Before our meeting in Chicago, news reports stated that the average salary of a CEO of a publicly traded company was \$10 million a year and that CEOs were aiming for \$11 million the following year. I asked the roundtable participants if they needed another million because they weren't getting by on \$10 million alone. One participant explained that it wasn't actually about the money! I was speechless. He went on to explain that CEOs are very competitive and always want to win. (I identified with that because I also have a competitive side; it makes me a good advocate.) He said that in business, money is the measure of winning. They were striving for the additional million dollars to show that they were winning.

Since then, I have been advocating that we find another measure of winning in order to mend the income and wealth gaps in our nation. I believe that the Business Roundtable's recent statement is one step in the right direction. It is hopefully the beginning of a shift in corporate culture that together we helped to bring about.



Nuns on the Bus visit the bakery at Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles

If money for shareholders is no longer the sole measure of winning, then we have made a dent in corporate culture to make it clear that employees matter. Customers matter. Communities matter. Our environment matters. Even if this statement is mainly a public relations strategy, it is an important one because it acknowledges a cultural shift that we at NETWORK have been working towards for decades.

With this announcement, we have a chance to shift corporate practices towards adopting family-friendly workplace policies.

Since Pope Leo XIII wrote *Rerum Novarum* in 1891, every subsequent pope has agreed that the economy must serve workers, not the other way around. Pope Francis has railed against a "globalization of indifference" as the global economy ignores the needs of its workers. We at NETWORK have been active on Capitol Hill to advance legislation for better working conditions and family friendly workplaces. IF businesses are ready to pay attention to the needs of workers, then we have a chance to advance policies that ensure equal pay for equal work, allow workers to take paid leave, and plan work hours that let families enjoy their lives. This opportunity comes around once in a quarter century!

Let us advocate for family-friendly policies at all levels of government. Let us make this a key issue in the 2020 election. This is a moment where our efforts are beginning to bear fruit. Do not stop now! Together we can improve our nation by paying attention to the needs of workers and their families. ☀️

# Notable Quotables

What justice-seekers have been saying this quarter

“A complete and accurate count is the bedrock of our democracy.”

Mark Hynes, CEO of Granicus, writing about the 2020 Census in U.S. News

“I think the group is looking for a way to help rural Missourians and I really appreciate that.”

Joanie Shores quoted in the Columbia Daily Tribune following a NETWORK Rural Roundtable

“We expect our president, and all who serve this nation as leaders, to be always mindful of the common good and the dignity of each and every person.”

Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) calling on President Trump to stop divisive and polarizing rhetoric

“If we believe that God cares for all, shouldn't that include a fair wage?”

Terence Lester, minister and community activist, writing about low wages in Sojourners

“In the same way that a dollar saved compounds, so does a dollar stolen.”

Mayor Pete Buttigieg speaking about the racial wealth gap

“In 2017, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helped 1.5 million children rise out of poverty. Instead of investing in SNAP, the administration wants to cut SNAP — again!”

Tweet from YWCA (@YWCAUSA) about proposed cuts to SNAP

“Let us say it forcefully: Poverty is not inevitable!”

Pope Francis speaking to families in the Akamasoa community in Madagascar

“Christians must stand decisively with and for the victims, regardless of their nations of origin, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or religious creed. In the face of hate, Christians cannot stake out a ‘neutral center.’”

Arturo J. Bañuelas, M.T. Dávila, Miguel H. Díaz, and Carmen Nanko-Fernández writing for Theology en la Plaza in the wake of the El Paso shooting

“The conditions our children face at the border is a stark reminder of the moral bankruptcy of our current immigration policy.”

Sister Simone Campbell, SSS quoted in National Catholic Reporter about the D.C. Catholic Day of Action

“I cannot stand by while these inhumane things are done in my name. I am called, pushed even, to stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters — to pray, act and speak out.”

Sister Susan Franco, CSJP, writing in Global Sisters Report about participating in the New Jersey Catholic Day of Action

“A budget is a statement of values. We cannot continue to fund rogue agencies that inflict pain and trauma on children and families.”

Tweet from Rep. Ayanna Pressley (MA-07) (@RepPressley)

“We must have a moral Pentecost, and we must unite right here, right now.”

Rev. William Barber, III speaking at the Wild Goose Festival in Hot Springs, North Carolina



# Family-Friendly Policies Value People over Profits

## *Universal Paid Family Leave Would Boost Economy, Respect the Dignity of All*

BY TRALONNE SHORTER

**P**roviding family-friendly workplace protections is necessary to build an economy that puts people, not profit at the center.

Inspired by the principles of Catholic Social Justice, NETWORK advocates for workplace and labor policies that respect the dignity of all, and recognize the needs of every human person to be in community with one another. Work must operate in concert with human needs of community — and our government should implement policies that advance the common good by ensuring family-friendly workplaces.

In our advocacy for family-friendly workplace policies, we focus on guaranteeing that all workers have access to paid family leave and sick leave, ending the gender and racial wage gap, and encouraging flexible scheduling. These policy priorities give employees and employers more tools and resources to create mutually rewarding workplaces.

The category of family-friendly workplace policies encompasses several policies, including paid sick leave and family leave; work scheduling; raising the minimum wage and achieving equal pay; affordable childcare; and more. But the patchwork of existing workplace policies is not sufficient for workers and their loved ones. Just 17% of workers in the U.S. have access to paid

family leave, and only 40% of workers can take paid personal medical leave.<sup>1</sup> The private sector is making strides in offering family-friendly workplaces, but those protections are not enough on their own and often leave out the lowest-paid workers.

The United States is the only industrialized nation that does not provide universal paid leave benefits, making time off inaccessible to lower-wage workers. While 92% of the highest wage earners have access to paid sick leave, only 31% of the lowest earning workers can take paid sick time.<sup>2</sup>

While all of these issues need to be improved, paid family leave is one of the most pressing issues for workers. The Washington Center for Equitable Growth, a nonprofit dedicated to researching economic inequality and its effects, studies ways to expand family-friendly policies in our nation. In its recent report, “Paid Family Care Leave: A Missing Piece in the U.S. Social Insurance System,” the Center analyzes the current situation of family care leave in the United States and how to improve access to paid family care leave for all workers and families. What follows is a selection from that report.

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*Tralonne Shorter is a Senior Government Relations Advocate at NETWORK.*

## **Paid Family Care Leave: A Missing Piece in the U.S. Social Insurance System**

*By Jane Waldfogel and Emma Liebman*

### **Why Is Paid Family Care Leave Important?**

Employees too often face the challenge of balancing work and family responsibilities. In the United States, federal workplace policies were first established based on 1930s-era expectations of stay-at-home mothers, which still limit family leave options today and exacerbate the challenge of balancing work and family.<sup>3</sup> Today’s two-parent families are more likely to have two wage earners at their helm than a breadwinner and a stay-at-home caregiver, and more families are headed by single parents.<sup>4</sup> But federal policy has yet to account for the gaps created by these transitions. As a result, employees whose family members develop serious health

conditions often must choose between taking time off from work to care for their loved ones or keeping their jobs.

The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 is the only piece of federal legislation in the United States to confront this type of work-family conflict. FMLA entitles employees to unpaid time off from work for approved family and medical reasons, including the need to care for a seriously ill family member.<sup>5</sup> But because the law does not provide paid leave (and because of other limitations), FMLA leaves many employees with no viable solution when their family members become seriously ill.

*continued on page 6*

## Lack of Coverage and Eligibility under the Family and Medical Leave Act

The Family and Medical Leave Act exclusively covers employees who work at firms with 50 or more employees within a 75-mile radius. Moreover, employees must have worked at a covered firm for at least 12 months and have logged at least 1,250 hours during the year preceding their request in order to be eligible to claim leave through FMLA.<sup>6</sup> As a result, only 55.9% of the private-sector workforce is eligible for leave under the law.<sup>7</sup>

Ineligibility under FMLA has a considerable effect on employee leave-taking, especially for employees needing family care leave. The most recent FMLA survey found that in previous year, 22.4% of eligible leave-takers took leave to care for a seriously ill family member, while only 14.2% of ineligible leave-takers took leave of this kind.<sup>8</sup> Employees who took leave to care for their own serious illness, however, did so at similar rates regardless of their eligibility status, and employees who took leave to attend to a new child were actually more likely than not to be ineligible for FMLA leave.<sup>9</sup> These findings suggest that eligibility status disproportionately obstructs leave-taking among those needing family care leave.

Additionally, ineligibility under FMLA disproportionately affects those who need leave to care for a seriously ill family member because of the relationship between low-income status and serious illness. People who are young, Latinx, low paid, or lack a high school degree are all less likely to be eligible for FMLA than are their counterparts because they frequently work at small firms and are often unable to maintain the same job for a year.<sup>10</sup>

## Many Reasons for Leave Are Not Covered by the Family and Medical Leave Act

Another important contributor to unmet need for leave, and one that primarily affects employees who need family care leave, is the FMLA's narrowly defined qualifying reasons. The law permits employees to take unpaid leave to care for a "spouse, son, daughter, or parent who has a serious health condition," designating a spouse as "a husband or wife as defined or recognized in the state where the individual was married."<sup>11</sup> As such, the law bars employees from taking job-protected leave to care for other close family members such as siblings, grandparents, grandchildren, or even domestic partners.

Many individuals rely on extended family members for care when they are ill. Approximately 85 million people in the U.S. live with extended family members.<sup>12</sup> Leave coverage limited to the traditionally defined nuclear family does not account for these families.



Tralonne Shorter speaks at the introduction of the Healthy Families Act in March 2019.



Advocates for paid sick days, including Rep. Rosa DeLauro (CT-03) and Rep. Lauren Underwood (IL-14), speak about the importance of the Healthy Families Act outside the U.S. Capitol.

As a result, many employees likely experience barriers to caring for nonqualifying family members. While data on the types of family members that employees need to take time off to care for is slim, there is evidence that this FMLA restriction prevents eligible individuals from taking leave or claiming the benefits of the law during their leave. The 2012 FMLA survey found that for all employees, both eligible and ineligible, 18.2% of people who took leave in the 12 months prior to the survey did so to care for a covered family member, including a parent, spouse, or child, while 3.3% did so to care for a person who did not warrant FMLA coverage.<sup>13</sup>

## Lack of Paid Leave

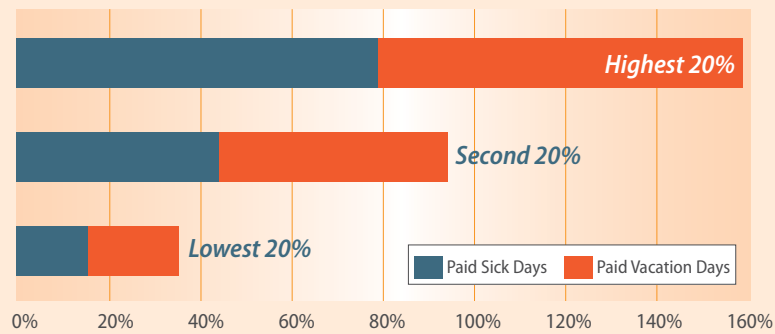
While the above shortcomings to the FMLA are important, the lack of any provision for paid leave is a larger challenge. Simply put, lack of paid leave means that eligible employees often do not take leave because they are unable to go without pay. The 2012 FMLA study found that nearly half (45.7%) of eligible employees who expressed an unmet need for time off did not take leave because they could not afford to do so.<sup>14</sup>

While some FMLA leave-takers are paid during their time off, it is mostly those employees with banked paid sick or vacation days who receive compensation. In the lowest two household income quintiles — with incomes up to about \$47,000 — only 15.2% and 43.9%, respectively, have access to paid sick days, and only 19.4% and 49.2%, respectively, have access to paid vacation days. This compares with 78.5% and 78.6% of employees in the top U.S. quintile — with incomes more than \$127,000 — who have paid sick days and paid vacation days, respectively.<sup>15</sup>

As a result, low-income employees are more likely to be uncompensated during leave-taking, despite their greater need for continued wages. More than half of employees with income below the median family income of \$62,000 in the United States who took leave received no pay during their leave, compared with 17.7% of those who took leave with incomes at or above the median.<sup>16</sup>

Indeed, a recent analysis found that even controlling for a host of differences in demographics, geography, industry, and occupation, workers who are less educated, Latinx, and employed part time are significantly less likely than their counterparts to have access to paid leave.<sup>17</sup> Thus, relying on employers to voluntarily provide paid leave is unlikely to address the overall shortfall in this type of leave coverage and the disparities in coverage.

## Who Has Access to Paid Leave?



Source: [www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/OASP/legacy/files/FMLA-2012-Technical-Report.pdf](http://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/OASP/legacy/files/FMLA-2012-Technical-Report.pdf)

## Consequences of the Lack of Paid Leave

The absence of paid family care leave, as well as paid medical and family leave more generally, leads to numerous consequences. It can contribute to an increase in employee debt and a decrease in well-being for employees and for their seriously ill family members.

Without paid leave coverage, leave-needing employees may need to restructure their lives and careers around caregiving, reducing their work hours, switching to less demanding jobs, working part time, or even retiring early in order to accommodate their familial responsibilities. Needless to say, reductions in work time due to lack of paid leave lead to reductions in wages, employee benefits, and career advancement prospects, while early retirement reduces earnings and future Social Security benefits.<sup>18</sup> While such losses can pose challenges for any family, they are likely to be especially difficult for low-income families.<sup>19</sup>

Even for those covered by the FMLA, leave-taking can be financially burdensome. Healthcare is expensive and can cause financial pressure, especially for families supporting a member with a serious or ongoing medical condition. As mentioned above, while some employers provide some paid leave even though the FMLA does not require it, many employees do not receive full pay during their leave, some of whom may fall below the poverty line and/or incur debt. The 2012 FMLA survey found that among FMLA-eligible employees who received partial or no pay during their time off, nearly one third fell behind on bills or borrowed money, and nearly 10% went on public assistance.<sup>20</sup>

Predictably, workers with lower incomes are more likely to take these actions. The 2017 Pew Research study found that 57% of employees with household incomes of less than \$30,000 took on debt after a partially compensated or uncompensated leave period. Nearly half (48%) of this low-income group went onto public assistance during their leave, while 46% put off pay-



Jeanette Hutchinson, a home care worker, shares her story of working 90 hours a week with no paid leave in Kansas City, Missouri.





Home care workers and justice-seekers gather in Kansas City, Missouri, during the Nuns on the Bus 2015 trip.

ing bills, and 45% borrowed money from family or friends.<sup>21</sup> These high rates of hardship and debt demonstrate the serious economic consequences of the lack of paid leave, especially for lower-income individuals and families.

## Conclusion

Statistics on the need for leave to care for a seriously ill family member are striking. Although fewer than 5% of U.S. workers take such leave in a given year, fully one-quarter of the U.S. workforce has taken such leave during the course of their working lives and a similar share expect to do so in future. Moreover, 10% of the U.S. workforce says they have needed such leave in the past 2 years but were not able to take it.

The Family and Medical Leave Act only partially addresses this need due to its limited coverage, restrictive qualifying conditions, and most importantly, lack of provision for paid leave. In the absence of comprehensive paid leave options in the United States, employees who need to take leave to care for their seriously ill family members are at risk of negative outcomes. The challenges for people who are low income, less educated, and nonwhite are likely to be particularly consequential, as they are all currently less likely to have access to paid family care leave and more likely to have family members who may face serious health challenges.

Read the full text of the Washington Center for Equitable Growth's report at:

[www.equitablegrowth.org/research-paper/paid-family-care-leave](http://www.equitablegrowth.org/research-paper/paid-family-care-leave)

*Jane Waldfogel is the Compton Foundation Centennial Professor at the Columbia University School of Social Work and co-director of the Columbia Population Research Center. Emma Liebman is pursuing an M.P.H. at the Columbia Mailman School of Public Health.*

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# NETWORK Continues Learning about Rural Communities

*At the beginning of 2019, NETWORK began holding Rural Roundtables across the country. To date, Sister Simone has held conversations in ten rural communities — California to Minnesota to Texas — to listen to residents speak about their struggles and their strengths. Additional Rural Roundtables will take place before the end of the year.*

*In these listening sessions, key themes emerge in multiple conversations. People living in rural areas face many of the same challenges people living in urban areas face, as well as additional challenges unique to rural realities or unique to a specific area. As we advocate for policies that promote the common good, it is important to understand the lived reality of all in our nation.*

## **Meg Olson, NETWORK Grassroots Mobilization Manager, reflects on a Rural Roundtable:**

This past summer, I coordinated a Rural Roundtable in Columbia, Missouri with local host Rhonda Perry, the program director of the Missouri Rural Crisis Center, and Alice Kitchen, one of NETWORK’s board members. I thought the event would be a “welcome home” for me; before coming to NETWORK, I lived in Missouri and worked in the Advocacy Department at Catholic Charities. I lobbied tirelessly for Medicaid Expansion using statistics about rural hospitals and for TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) reform, talking endlessly in legislators’ offices about how job training opportunities — and jobs — were scarce in rural Missouri. Through the local foods movement, I knew organic farmers across the state and visited

many of their farms. Plus my cousin Katie lives in Rhineland, Missouri, population 145, and I visited her all the time!

As I listened to the 20 Rural Roundtable participants, it became clear to me that even though I cared deeply for rural Missouri, I had lived in St. Louis, and there were many things I didn’t actually know or understand. One of these is the CAFOs, or Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations. There is one operation in mid-Missouri that sprawls across three counties, contains over two million hogs, and is only operated by five people. This vision continues to haunt me. The smell and water and soil contamination from this led a few of the participants to leave their land and move to Columbia. These corporate farms are greedy for the land, but care nothing about the existing communities.

At the end of a difficult and sometimes emotional conversation, Sister Simone asked everyone to name what they liked about living in a rural community. Nearly everyone mentioned the land; when one woman said, “the sounds,” everyone nodded, beaming. I was reminded of the Catholic Bishops of Appalachia’s second pastoral letter, *At Home in the Web of Life* (1993), where they write, “the people are God’s co-creators...all in sacred communion with land and forest and water and air.”

I was reminded of how after a long day at the Missouri Capitol, I would shun the highway back to St. Louis in favor of the country roads. Driving on Route 50 through the Ozark foothills past rocky farms, I would roll down my windows and rejoice in the sounds of rural of Missouri. ☀️





# Meeting this Moment with Prayerful Action

## We Are Complicit in Government-Sponsored Harm

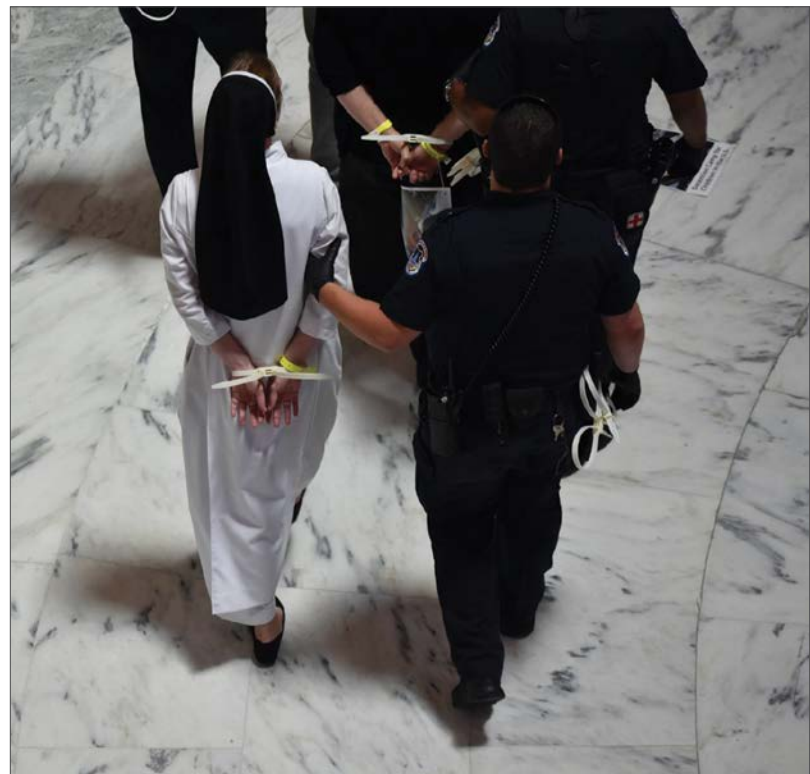
By Sister Quincy Howard, OP

*On July 18, more than 200 Catholic justice-seekers gathered in Washington, D.C. to demand an end to child detention. Capitol Police arrested more than 70 advocates praying and holding photos of children who died in immigrant detention. Sister Quincy Howard, OP, NETWORK Government Relations Specialist, and Laura Peralta-Schulte, NETWORK Senior Government Relations Advocate, were among those arrested. Another Catholic Day of Action in Newark, New Jersey followed in September, led by Cardinal Joseph Tobin. Future actions will continue as long as the government continues to hold children and families in immigrant detention.*

**M**y decision to participate in an act of civil disobedience at the Catholic Day of Action this summer was in many ways an easy discernment. I have septuagenarian and octogenarian sisters who are currently volunteering at the border to offer comfort and assistance to vulnerable immigrants in whatever way they can. I know there are many Catholic operations and other faithful people of goodwill along the border currently scrambling to offer support and welcome to these families. The biblical mandate to welcome the stranger could not be clearer. However, their diligent and faithful service still cannot meet the immense need. The damage our government is inflicting on these children and families goes deep, and the choices that determine the depth of their misery are being made here in Washington.

Our government is criminalizing immigrants' and asylum seekers' desperation and inflicting irreparable damage to their spirits and, in many cases, to their bodies. While this seems inconceivable to me, the evidence is clear that this is in fact happening. Thousands of children are being psychologically scarred for life, even as you read this — and then there are those who already died in custody. It goes beyond government incompetence and claims of the system being overwhelmed. The Trump administration is pushing to waive our responsibility to human rights and basic humanitarian standards of care. Theirs is a strategy of deterrence via pure cruelty: families torn apart, children in cages, vulnerable asylum seekers forced to “remain” among the violent, criminal gangs that prey on them.

I can scarcely contain my outrage at this administration's policies targeting desperate immigrants. When Congress continues funding the abuse and government-sponsored terrorism of immigrant communities, it adds a deeper collective shame. When our taxpayer dollars enable inadequate private detention centers to warehouse children for profit and pay for enforcement officers to tear apart vulnerable families with impunity, we are all complicit.



Sister Quincy Howard, OP, is led away by Capitol Police during the Catholic Day of Action in D.C.





Fr. Joseph Nangle, OFM, speaks outside of the Capitol Building during the Catholic Day of Action

My act of civil disobedience during the Catholic Day of Action in Washington, D.C. was a first for me. I chose to participate in such a visible manner in order to challenge people of conscience. The past two years, for me, have been an ongoing effort to gauge *how bad have things really gotten?* I feel the outrage swelling in myself with each new agonizing story and punishing tactic. I wonder why this outrage is not more visible, spilling into the evening news or penetrating more Sunday homilies.

I understand it is difficult to be clear-sighted when moving down a slippery slope. I pray that the story and image of our arrests provide affirmation to anyone who needs it that we have reached an intolerable point. Simply expressing regret, misgivings, or concern no longer suffices. The photo of a drowned father and 23-month-old daughter taken in June haunts us precisely because it is unacceptable: we cannot stifle our outrage or we will rot from the inside.

There are many ways to express your outrage. You can call or email your elected officials in D.C., visit their local offices, advocate on social media or in a newspaper, or take other actions. What is crucial is that you express your call for justice loudly and clearly for others to hear. ☀️

Sister Quincy Howard, OP, is a Government Relations Specialist at NETWORK.

## Commenting on Cruelty

### A Faithful Response to the Trump Administration

Since taking office, President Trump and his Cabinet have repeatedly sought out opportunities to change federal rules or create new rules to achieve their goals of cutting federal programs and limiting immigration. In response, the NETWORK community has reacted strongly with education and advocacy to ease the harsh effects of these changes.

Often, the only way for justice-seekers to respond to these rules is by submitting a comment to the federal register during the public comment period. Before a proposed rule or a rule change goes into effect, federal agencies must read and consider every comment submitted during that comment period. Even if the agency follows through on imposing the proposed rule, the comments are an important tactic for registering public disapproval of the rule.

Recently, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services announced the final rule changing the public charge standards, which is scheduled to take effect on October 15, 2019. This rule punishes immigrants who use legally-available services, denying Green Cards to immigrants who use life-saving assistance programs. NETWORK worked with an interfaith and advocacy coalition to help submit over 250,000 comments against this public charge rule, and now opposition to the rule is continuing in the courts.

In addition to commenting on the public charge rule, over 600 members of the NETWORK community submitted comments on the Department of Housing and Urban Development's proposed "mixed-status" rule, which affects public housing eligibility. By ending eligibility for households with an undocumented household member, this rule would force 25,000 families to choose between tearing their family apart to continue receiving housing assistance or being evicted from their homes.

Finally, over 1,000 NETWORK members took action to oppose a rule that would change how work requirements are enforced for adults who currently qualify for SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program).

We are certain that the Trump administration will continue revealing new administrative rules and rule changes that harm immigrants and low-income families and individuals. We must not allow these sinful policies to be implemented in our name. We will continue to make our disapproval known through the public comment process. Public comments from NETWORK have brought attention to these issues and made it clear that people of faith say no to anti-immigrant and anti-family policies!



# Advocating for Policies that Mend the Gaps in an Election Cycle

Sister Emily TeKolste, SP

With the 2020 election season underway, we at NETWORK are doing everything we can to make sure the issues we care about are important to candidates and officials running for re-election. Using our Mend the Gaps agenda, we published a Mend the Gaps policy platform, which laid out our priorities including: ending child detention and reuniting families; addressing economic inequality; and providing access to health care, housing, and democracy. NETWORK is not endorsing any candidates for elected office, but promoting the importance of our Mend the Gaps policy platform to all seeking to hold elected office in our nation.

Democratic presidential candidates gathered in Houston for the September debate, where they answered questions about health care, immigration, education, and economic inequality. NETWORK members and supporters across the country hosted debate watch parties, played Mend the Gaps Debate Bingo, and tweeted out their thoughts on the debate.

Sister Elizabeth Walters, IHM organized watch Debate parties in Michigan; she wrote:

“We IHM Sisters and Associates in Michigan happily responded to this invitation to host a debate party and in a short amount of time we organized six parties with 41 participants. Materials on how to host a party and creative ways to engage participants were sent out by NETWORK in advance of the debate/parties. The NETWORK Lobby 2020 Policy Platform was especially helpful to us. We plan to continue circulating this document widely.

“For IHM participants the NETWORK Debate Watch Party was a chance to reconnect with one another and with NETWORK. Together we focused on a critical moment in our country’s history. We listened, engaged, and began to plan for the future.”

Other participants shared their thoughts with us or tweeted them out. Responses included:

- ✓ “How will the most vulnerable, the young, and sick children be protected and cared for in this country regardless of where



they are from? We must open our arms and hearts to these children so they can have a full life that is safe and healthy.”

- ✓ “What ideas have you to effectively address systemic problems and systems that are manipulated for personal power and wealth — voting rights, racism, white supremacy, trade agreements, etc.?”
- ✓ “What should be our IMMEDIATE response to the immigration crisis at the border?”
- ✓ “Playing #DebateBingo with @NETWORKLobby. Still haven’t crossed off debate on SNAP, gerrymandering, child detention, reducing racial wealth gap, or getting \$ out of politics. But glad for the robust convo on guns. It’s time to #MendtheGaps”
- ✓ “Some of the candidates made ‘promises’ that will require more and more spending. What is our nation going to do about our trillions of dollars-worth of debt? We are burdening future generations with our debt.”
- ✓ “I’ve not heard how universal health coverage will be financed. Most candidates skirted the issue. Will the middle class and poor carry this by higher taxes? Need more specificity.”
- ✓ “Please cease making disparaging, untrue remarks about each other. It is not necessary. There are other ways to disagree.”

Thank you to all who participated in watching the debate with NETWORK!



# Increasing Employment for People with Disabilities

## *Family-Friendly Workplaces Include Accommodations and Representation*

SENATOR TOM HARKIN

It has been nearly 30 years since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act — landmark civil rights legislation that eliminated barriers and opened our society more fully to people with disabilities.

The ADA had four primary goals: equal opportunity, full participation in American society, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency. We have made significant progress on these goals, but when it comes to economic self-sufficiency, we still have a good deal of work to do.

The unemployment rate among Americans with disabilities is the same as it was in 1991, when the ADA went into effect. Any conversation about accommodating, family-friendly workplaces would be incomplete without including employees with disabilities.

People with disabilities want to work, they want to contribute to society, and they are proud of the work they can do. Yet, only about 40% of working-age Americans with disabilities are employed.

I knew I wanted to focus much of my time and attention on disability when I retired from the Senate. So, with my wife Ruth, we established The Harkin Institute for Public Policy & Citizen Engagement at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa. At The Harkin Institute, we provide robust, nonpartisan programming and research for policymakers and the public in four key issue areas: labor and employment, retirement security, wellness and nutrition, and people with disabilities.

We established The Harkin International Disability Employment Summit in 2016, and in four years, we've gathered

603 people from more than 50 countries — private sector businesses, disabled persons organizations, nonprofits, government agencies — to discuss best practices and ways to increase employment among people with disabilities.

At the 2017 Harkin Summit, I issued a bold challenge to double the rate of employment of people with disabilities globally in 10 years. It is an aggressive goal, but aggressive goals are necessary to produce meaningful change. The Harkin Summit is about finding solutions, and after four years of gathering passionate advocates and business leaders, we have identified some common themes.

Despite what many employers might think, there are many steps businesses and workplaces can take to promote accessibility that cost absolutely nothing. Much can be accomplished by creating a workplace culture that promotes thoughtful, effective communication. Nobody knows it all. Sometimes the only way we can learn is by asking questions. By the same token, people with disabilities need to feel confident in their ability to self-identify in the workplace so they can access the accommodations they need without fear of being treated differently than before they self-identified.

Part of creating an inclusive culture is representation of people with disabilities and dispelling the notion that people with disabilities are limited to entry level positions. Every position should be open to anyone who qualifies for it, regardless of disability.

Creating opportunities where people with disabilities can thrive does not have to be costly, time-consuming, or intimidating. With events like The Harkin Summit and resources provided by The Harkin Institute and other disability employment organizations, there's never been more guidance to help in these efforts.

Visit [www.harkininstitute.org](http://www.harkininstitute.org) to read the complete proceedings from the 2018 Harkin International Employment Summit and learn more.

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*Senator Tom Harkin represented Iowa in the United States Congress for more than four decades. He served Iowa's 5<sup>th</sup> Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1975 to 1985 and was a U.S. Senator from 1985 to 2015. Sen. Harkin's legacy policy priorities have included federal farm policy, civil rights for Americans with disabilities, childhood nutrition and food access, healthcare access and reform, labor issues, and access to and improvement of education.*



Senator Harkin speaks with Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) during the 2018 Summit.

# Raise the Wage Passes the House, Conflict over Government Funding Ahead

*An update from D.C. on key votes held during the past quarter  
and social justice issues on the horizon*



## Key Vote: Living Wages

On July 18, 2019, the House of Representatives passed the Raise the Wage Act in a 231-199 vote. This long-overdue legislation lifts the federal wage floor from \$7.25 an hour to \$15 an hour by 2025. Additionally, the Raise the Wage Act phases out the subminimum wage for tipped workers, workers with disabilities, and workers under the age of 20. This bill would also automatically adjust future minimum wage increases rather than requiring Congressional action to do so. After 2025, the annually adjusted minimum wage is based on the nation's median hourly wages; this approach would curtail growing pay inequality.

NETWORK supported and advocated for the Raise the Wage Act because it is the most direct and immediate way to alleviate the economic struggle of low wage workers in today's economy. Despite winning strong support — including three Republican votes — it is unlikely that Republican leadership will bring this legislation to a vote in the Senate. In June, a month prior to the House vote, our nation marked the longest period without an increase in the minimum wage since a federal minimum wage was established in 1938. Each day the Senate does not vote on the Raise the Wage Act extends this shameful record.



## On the Horizon: Appropriations

Tensions are brewing between Senate Republicans and House and Senate Democrats over funding for Fiscal Year 2020. Congress has until November 21, 2019 to complete work on the FY 2020 federal budget or else risk a government shutdown, but the President's border wall continues to be a sticking point for lawmakers. Democrats, with the support of immigrant advocacy groups, oppose the Trump administration's continuous push for \$5 billion to construct a wall along the southern border.

To date, the Administration has diverted \$3.6 billion in military construction funding for the border wall using agency "transfer authority," a common tactic used by previous administrations to bypass Congressional approval. While Senate Republicans are reticent to cede their constitutional "powers of the purse" to the president, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (who is up for reelection next November) seems compelled to give President Trump what he wants. Meanwhile, Democrats appear unwilling to back down from an evolving budget battle over border wall funding. The hope is leadership in both chambers can quell the president's wishes to build a border wall without shutting down the government. Should a government shutdown occur, the federal workforce, along with thousands of immigrant families, will be the ones who suffer as a result.





ADVOCATES FOR JUSTICE, INSPIRED BY CATHOLIC SISTERS

NETWORK—a Catholic leader in the global movement for justice and peace—educates, organizes, and lobbies for economic and social transformation.

NETWORK LOBBY FOR CATHOLIC SOCIAL JUSTICE

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FELLOWS

- Nancy Groth, Joan Neal, Patricia Sodo



Share the 2019 NETWORK Congressional Voting Record with Others!

Give a Gift Today!

As the first session of the 116th Congress comes to a close, it's important to look back and remember how our Senators and Representatives voted over the past year. What were their positions on H.R.1 the For the People Act, or on reducing funding for immigrant detention? Did they vote to protect and promote the Common Good?

In the January issue of Connection, NETWORK will score every Member of Congress on whether or not they valued people over profits. Which legislators ensured that all people — the 100% — have what they need to live dignified lives? How do you think your Senators and Representative will score?

With an investment of \$50, you can make sure that a family member, friend, or colleague receives a year's subscription to Connection magazine, starting with our Voting Record issue! You can inspire others to be better equipped to educate, organize, and lobby for a just society.

Gift a NETWORK membership today by donating online at www.networklobby.org/member or by using the envelope inside this issue.

A reduced membership rate of \$20 is available for retirees, students, and those with limited incomes.



ADVOCATES FOR JUSTICE, INSPIRED BY CATHOLIC SISTERS

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## NETWORK Welcomes New Associates

NETWORK is excited to welcome five individuals to the Associate Program this year. Our 2019-2020 associates are (from left to right) Charlotte Hakikson, Anne Marie Bonds, Giovana Oaxaca, Ness Perry, and Alex Burnett. They will work with us for the next year educating, organizing, and lobbying for racial and economic justice.

This group has already shown a dedication to advancing policies that mend the gaps in our nation. Associates bring so much positive energy to our Spirit-filled network, and they are critical members of our staff. We are grateful to have them bring their expertise and passion for justice to NETWORK.

