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JUST POLICIES
FOR ALL OF US





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ON THE COVER

Democracy reform advocates stand outside of the Supreme Court during a rally in support of S.1, the For the People Act. Photo by Colleen Ross, NETWORK Lobby.

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Stretching Our Moral Imaginations

Reflecting on New Beginnings and Enormous Possibilities

MARY J. NOVAK, NETWORK EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

For the past two decades, I have scheduled my annual eight-day silent retreat over the July 4th holiday. I do this so I can include the state of our country in my prayer and reflection — away from dishonest representation of our history that often pervades this holiday — and consider the question of what I am called to do in the face of this complexity. In 2004, that call had me leave a comfortable university life to become a full-time activist as the U.S. pursued armed conflict in Iraq, part of its misguided and protracted 9/11 response.


This year, my retreat began where it always does, with gratitude. I was deeply moved remembering the expansive welcome I received when I joined the NETWORK staff. Meeting so many of you during those first weeks filled me with a particular kind of joy as I learned how extensive and committed the NETWORK community is in this unified effort to engage a “better kind of politics” that puts “human dignity back at the center.” Thank you to all the NETWORK state advocacy teams, members, donors, supporters, and Board members for your grace-filled hospitality and embrace.

During my retreat, I found myself rejoicing because of the NETWORK staff I have the privilege to call colleagues. Before I even arrived, they were hard at work creating the conditions for integrating NETWORK’s next Executive Director into this community. When I arrived, they immediately began connecting me to all of you as well as key contacts in NETWORK’s education, advocacy, and lobbying spaces. As you will read, soon thereafter, NETWORK coordinated our first Virtual Lobby Day, successfully bringing our members’ and activists’ powerful voices to Capitol Hill in support of the EQUAL (Eliminating a Quantifiably Unjust Application of the Law) Act. Now the bill is gaining steam in Congress thanks to you.

As I settled into my yearly reflection on the state of our country, I was struck by the enormity of the current political

possibilities. In this *Connection* issue, the NETWORK Government Relations team explores the transformative possibilities for the common good in the Biden administration’s recovery package and the upgrades for which NETWORK is advocating (including making permanent the Child Tax Credit, universal housing vouchers, national paid leave program, and reforming our tax code to be more just). Together, we are working to make this once-in-a-lifetime possibility a reality.

Our broken immigration system continued to break my heart during my retreat, from the border situation to the status of 11 million folks without citizenship. Knowing we must embrace those who are called to leave their home countries to find safe haven here, I remembered finding consolation meeting with Catholic Sisters called to serve those seeking asylum at the U.S.-Mexico border. I remembered also being inspired by conversation and prayer with dedicated and passionate activists who have direct experience with this broken system. Together, we called on Congress to create a pathway to citizenship during the *Fast for Freedom*, which you will also read about inside.

Let me end by naming what has continued to give me great hope if we succeed, and fill me with great dread if we fail. As you will read, we must pass democracy reform to stop voter suppression and get dark money out of politics, and this must be coupled with establishing a reparations commission. The past year’s racial reckoning made it abundantly clear: we need both to grapple with our country’s history of slavery as well as its “virulent residue” and “protracted and pervasive influence” upon the social order, to quote the theologian, Dr. M. Shawn Copeland.** If we achieve this, I strongly believe we will open ourselves to possibilities that are beyond any of our moral imaginations. I look forward to answering the call of this unknown, but hope-filled future together. 

If we achieve this, I strongly believe we will open ourselves to possibilities that are beyond any of our moral imaginations.

* Pope Francis described this approach to politics last year in his encyclical letter, *Fratelli Tutti*, an approach the Catholic Sisters who founded NETWORK built into this community close to 50 years ago.

** Copeland, M. S. “A Black Theological Interrogation.” Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America, Atlanta, Georgia. June 12–15, 1991.

Notable Quotables

What justice-seekers have been saying this quarter

"Imagine if caregivers were at the forefront of shaping our future. We would have an economy that left no one behind, that put at the center the things that matter most."

Ai-jen Poo, Co-Founder and Executive Director of the National Domestic Workers Alliance speaking to *The Intercept*

"My fellow Americans, trickle-down economics has never worked. It's time to grow the economy from the bottom and the middle out."

President Joe Biden speaking to the Joint Session of Congress on April 29, 2021

"Let us open our arms and eyes to those who need to hear from us, yes I am moving from indifference to solidarity, because you are my sibling."

Bishop Mario E. Dorsonville, Auxiliary Bishop for the Archdiocese of Washington, blessing those who fasted and their supporters at the Fast for Freedom

"Participation in democracy is a moral issue, a spiritual issue."

Rev. Jimmie Hawkins, Director of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. Office of Public Witness, supporting the For the People Act

"We will not let up until we pass the For the People Act, until we pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Act, until we pass D.C. Statehood. Until every last voter suppression legislation is abolished."

Representative Cori Bush (MO-01) speaking at the Black Voters Matter Rally in D.C.

"Enough is enough. The Senate must pass the For the People Act, to restore integrity to our electoral system."

West Virginia faith leaders Sister Carmella Camione, Rev. Ronald English, Bishop Mike Klusmeyer, and Rabbi Victor Urecki's joint Op-ed published in the *Charleston Gazette-Mail*

"May all members of the LGBTQ+ community know you are sacred and bring immeasurable worth to our human family."

NETWORK Executive Director Mary Novak's blessing for Pride Month

"It's a day of reckoning. And it's time that this country live up to its promise of justice."

Congresswoman Barbara Lee (CA-13) speaking about Juneteenth and the need for H.R.40 to establish a commission to study reparations in the U.S.

"My Catholic faith teaches that it is a moral imperative to provide health care."

Sister Emily TeKolste, SP responding to the Supreme Court's decision to uphold the Affordable Care Act

"Our redemption as a nation comes through our democracy."

Rabbi Jonah Pesner, Director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, speaking at a Faithful Democracy rally in support of the For the People Act

"Our tax code is fundamentally broken. It is immoral when the wealthiest in this country pay ZERO in taxes."

Senator Ed Markey (@EdMarkey) tweeting his reaction to ProPublica's release of top billionaires' tax history



RECOVERING TOGETHER

Investing Equitably in the Common Good

“Infrastructure” Bills Need to Include NETWORK’s Build Anew Priorities

By Ronnate Asirwatham, Gina Kelley, Laura Peralta-Schulte, and Jarrett Smith, Members of the NETWORK Government Relations Team

The federal budget is a moral statement and this year, we need a budget reconciliation bill that meets the needs of this moment. Right now, too many families are struggling to balance childcare, family, and work, and millions struggle just to make ends meet. In the past year, the COVID-19 pandemic more greatly affected low-income people — disproportionately people of color — while billionaires profited. After years of stagnant wages and the persistence of the racial wealth gap, now is the time for Congress to pass a bold recovery package through a budget reconciliation process, with racial and environmental justice at the center. A realignment of our federal policies with our moral priorities is long overdue.

As Pope Francis recently said, the world must aspire to be better in the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic and not return to its previous “sickened” normality of injustice, inequality, and environmental degradation. We must address decades of inaction on infrastructure, poverty, the ongoing climate crisis, rising inequality, and a care economy that continues to support us. It is time to create a modern economy that works for everyone, including people living in rural areas, cities, and tribal communities.

To advance equity, we need to make significant and strategic investments in communities that have been marginalized by our systems and structures. Congress should make the American Rescue Plan’s expansion of the Child Tax Credit permanent, so it functions like a child allowance program that is accessible and available to all children who need it. Closing the Medicaid coverage gap would provide health coverage for 2.2 million more adults in the U.S., 60% of whom are Black or Latinx. Creating a federal paid leave program would ensure everyone has time to care for themselves, their families, and loved ones.

An equitable budget must require the wealthy and corporations to pay their fair share to create a fairer tax system as demanded by the public, reduce inequality, and help sustain funding for critical programs. Our shared recovery should make needed reforms to our tax code that can raise \$3.8 trillion exclusively from the rich and corporations. By enacting the measures NETWORK has prioritized here and allowing Medicare to negotiate drug prices, we can pay for groundbreaking, justice-oriented investments in our shared future.

(continued on page 6)

Make the EITC and Child Tax Credit Permanent

The expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit in the American Rescue Plan were two of the most significant policies aimed to end poverty — but their expansion is temporary, expiring in 2021. It is imperative that the recovery bill make expansions of these two refundable credits permanent.

Permanent expansion of the EITC would benefit close to 17.5 million childless working adults and the permanent expansion of the Child Tax Credit would lead to a 41% reduction in child poverty, with 9.8 million children lifted above or closer to the poverty line. The improved Child Tax Credit provides families with \$3,600 per child under age six and \$3,000 per child age 6-17, even for families with little or no income who were previously excluded from the full Child Tax Credit.

The Child Tax Credit expansion in the American Rescue Plan includes two key improvements. First, making the credit fully refundable and second, having monthly payments instead of annual. In the past, around 27 million children did not receive the full credit because their parents earned too little, even as middle- and higher-income families received the full amount. Now, the credit is fully refundable, meaning families with very low or no income (families that will be helped the most by the credit) will receive the maximum amount of the Child Tax Credit. Additionally, for the next seven months, the Child Tax Credit will be spread out in monthly checks instead of the credit coming to families annually. Families receive a maximum of \$300 per month for children under 6 and \$250 per month for children 6–17.

Children in immigrant families, including children with Individual Tax Identification Numbers (ITINs) should also be made eligible for the credit. The 2017 Republican tax law required children to have Social Security Numbers to be eligible for the Child Tax Credit for the first time — making an estimated one million children living in the U.S. ineligible for the credit. Rolling back this exclusion of immigrant children is essential for investing in our shared future.

We urge Congress to make the expanded EITC and Child Tax Credits permanent and ensure these benefits reach every child in the recovery package to invest in an equitable future. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to pass legislation to lift millions of children out of poverty, support mothers and families, and close the income gap that comes from women of color's disproportionate representation in low-paying jobs.* We cannot let it pass.

* National Women's Law Center. When Hard Work Is Not Enough: Women in Low-Paid Jobs. April 2, 2020. nwlc.org/resources/when-hard-work-is-not-enough-women-in-low-paid-jobs



Repealing the 2017 Tax Cuts to Ensure a Just Recovery

In 2017, the \$1.5 trillion Tax Cuts and Jobs Act became law after passing both the House and the Senate with only Republican support. The legislation, named “H.R.1” by the 115th Congress’s Republican leadership, significantly rewrote the tax code to make wide-reaching, regressive changes to our federal tax system largely benefiting corporations and the highest-income households with little relief for middle and lower-income households. In 2018, the Nuns on the Bus “Tax Justice Truth Tour” traveled the country educating voters about the injustices of the 2017 tax law and mobilized voters to hold their elected officials accountable for their harmful votes. Now we can repeal the most harmful provisions of the 2017 tax law. Our country, and our communities, cannot thrive if the wealthiest people and corporations fail to pay their fair share.

- **Restore the top individual tax rate to 39.6%**

One of the clearest giveaways to the wealthy in 2017 was cutting the top income tax rate from 39.6% to 37%. This benefitted the very wealthiest households in the U.S. — those in the top 1%. In reconciliation, the top individual tax rate should be restored to 39.6% (what it was before the 2017 law).

- **Increase the corporate tax rate to 28%**

The 2017 tax law lowered the corporate income tax rate from 35% to 21% starting in 2018. This cut, which brought the corporate tax rate down to less than half of what it was in the 1950s and 1960s, only further decreased the amount profitable corporations contribute to meet the needs of our national community and invest in our shared future. Because of this tax cut, the U.S. lost hundreds of billions in federal revenue in the years ahead of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additional tax policy proposals to advance tax justice include:

- End capital gains income tax breaks
- Strengthen IRS enforcement to prevent tax evasion
- Eliminate tax breaks that encourage offshoring
- Set a 15% global minimum tax rate for corporations

The 2017 tax law made an unfair system worse. In order to have an equitable recovery, we need to repeal its most harmful provisions and build a new system.

Invest in Housing

A home not only offers stability, it also has profound consequences for health, safety, education, employment, and wealth building. But right now there is a large gap in access to safe, stable, affordable housing in the United States. This is a problem both for families whose incomes qualify for federal housing assistance, because only 1 in 4 eligible households receive it, and for those whose incomes do not, because it drives up the cost of renting or buying. Moreover, the housing supply — especially of moderate- and low-priced rental housing — cannot meet current demand. There is no state or congressional district in the country with enough affordable homes for families with the lowest incomes. This is immoral and unjust.

Finding housing that fits their budget is a challenge for families all across the country, including cities, suburbs, and rural areas. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition,** 75% of all extremely low-income families are severely cost-burdened, paying more than half their income on rent.

Federal rental assistance reduces child poverty, homelessness, housing instability, and overcrowding, benefits that would reach more families by expanding rental voucher assistance to every eligible household. Bridging the gap between incomes and housing costs by creating a universal housing voucher system would also be good for the economy. Every dollar invested in affordable housing boosts local economies and supports job creation and retention. We also need to invest in building and renovating existing rental housing.

This recovery bill is an important opportunity to invest in our communities and our families through housing. A focus on increasing affordable housing supply and a decision to provide universal rental assistance has the power to change peoples' lives for generations to come.

** National Low Income Housing Coalition. The Problem. nihc.org/explore-issues/why-we-care/problem

Expand and Support Broadband

The COVID-19 pandemic proved that broadband is an absolute necessity for accessing health care, unemployment benefits, and other critical supports in communities across the country. As we think about how we will emerge from this pandemic, ensuring all households have access to broadband is a central equity issue.

During many conversations at Nuns on the Bus stops and Rural Roundtables, people often named lack of internet infrastructure as a key issue for their communities, as it cut them off from critical supports and opportunities. Expanding broadband is not only needed for vital social services, but it also grows an equitable economy by creating jobs across numerous industries.

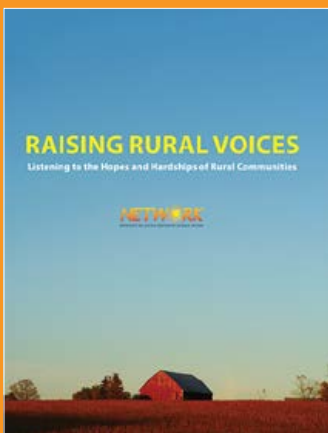
A new federal broadband policy must include adequate funding and policy regulations to provide high-quality service to all users, whether they live in cities, suburbs, or rural communities. One way to guarantee the same level of service is implementing neighborhood block speed maps. Without block speed maps, the industry contributes to digital redlining, which allocates the best service to those with the highest income in a zip code. Building our broadband infrastructure anew in this recovery package can open up jobs, opportunities, and futures across our country.

Extend Health Care to All

Congress must take steps to ensure everyone has access to quality, affordable health care.

Most importantly, Congress must close the current Medicaid coverage gap. As of right now, 12 states have refused to expand Medicaid, even after the American Rescue Plan offered them financial incentives to do so. This continued refusal has left more than two million people without access to the health care that they would otherwise qualify for. The majority of these individuals are people of color: 55% of those in the Medicaid coverage gap are Black, Hispanic, or Asian. In light of the continued refusal from

(continued on page 8)



From *Raising Rural Voices*, a report published by NETWORK in February 2020:

"Internet access and use were a continual topic of conversation among the rural communities. The Brownsville (Texas) roundtable, and several others, brought up internet infrastructure as a primary issue. They described how a lack of internet infrastructure cuts off communities and businesses from assistance and support. Put more bluntly: no internet, no government services."

Read more: networklobby.org/raisingruralvoices



states to address this crisis, the impetus lies on the federal government to take immediate action to close the Medicaid coverage gap.

In addition, Congress must extend access to health care to other communities it has historically taken steps to exclude. This includes:

- Extend access to Affordable Care Act benefits to DACA recipients
- Extend Medicaid coverage to incarcerated individuals starting 30 days before release
- End the five-year waiting period for lawful immigrants to be eligible for Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program
- Renew federal Medicaid funding for U.S. Territories

Ensuring the inclusion of these policies in the recovery bill brings us closer to becoming the society rooted in equity and dignity that we are called to be.

Protect and Invest in Workers

This recovery package provides a critical opportunity to invest in our workers and root our economy in solidarity by ensuring every community has access to good paying jobs, the opportunity to join a union, equitable scheduling practices, and comprehensive paid leave.

Including the Protecting the Right to Organize Act (PRO Act) in this package would position workers to bargain collectively, form unions, and engage in collective action without fear of retaliation from employers. A union contract is one of the best tools to close the racial and gender wage divide. A union contract also often ensures dignity and due process for workers, regardless of where they were born, who they are, or what industry they work in. Removing barriers to organizing and bargaining is critically important to workers who have been marginalized or those working in segregated fields such as the service industry. Finally, expanding collective bargaining will increase protections for women, people of color, immigrants, and the LGBTQ+ community in areas where our laws still fall short.

Whether workers are union members or not, access to paid family and medical leave is a necessity for every family. This recovery package provides a unique opportunity to finally pass a permanent, national paid leave policy. Universal paid leave must include job protection and anti-retaliation language, have an inclusive definition of family, and provide progressive wage replacement. Finally, this policy must center the needs, leadership, and expertise of women of color in its design, implementation, and evaluation to ensure just and equitable outcomes.



An altar honors essential workers and calls for a pathway to citizenship.

Create a Pathway to Citizenship

After decades of immigration reform legislation stalling in Congress, 2021 is the year to create a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers, Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holders, farm workers, essential workers, and their families. And with a simple majority vote, the House and the Senate can finally create this pathway to citizenship in the recovery package.

More than five million undocumented immigrants have been risking their lives as “essential workers” during the worst public health crisis in our lifetime. More than two-thirds of all undocumented immigrant workers serve in frontline jobs in essential industries including health care, home care, agriculture, food production, and construction. It is a moral failure that today in the U.S., millions of immigrant workers are considered “essential” and “deportable” at the same time.

The majority of people across the country and across the political spectrum support creating a pathway to citizenship for our undocumented neighbors, family members, and friends over deportation. A reconciliation bill that includes citizenship for Dreamers, TPS holders, farm workers, and essential workers will boost economic growth, create jobs and increase wages for all people living in the United States. It is time to make progress on finally creating a real pathway to citizenship. Only by doing this can we achieve a recovery that is truly equitable and inclusive for all regardless of immigration status.

Building Anew: Our Way Forward Together

It is time for our Representatives and Senators to act boldly by permanently extending the EITC and Child Tax Credit; reforming our immoral tax code; creating a pathway to citizenship for millions of Dreamers, TPS holders, farm workers, and essential workers; investing in safe and affordable housing; creating a national paid family and medical leave program, and more.

In addition to passing a just recovery package, it is essential for Congress to enact other policy priorities, including establishing a reparations commission, protecting voting rights, and reforming our criminal legal system. Only by building anew in each of these areas will we create a truly just society where all voices are heard and all people can thrive.

Catholic Members of Congress Release Statement of Principles

Sixty Representatives Live Out Their “Lofty Vocation” and Commitment to Equally Sacred Policies

In June, sixty Catholic members of the U.S. House of Representatives released a statement of principles documenting how their faith influences them as lawmakers, making clear their commitment to the principles at the heart of Catholic social teaching. In addition to being grounded in 21st century theology, their statement laid out with clarity how they proceed in living their life as a Catholic through their vocation as a public servant. The Representatives

demonstrated how — as Pope Francis points out in *Fratelli Tutti* — it is possible to live politics as a “lofty vocation and one of the highest forms of charity, inasmuch as it seeks the common good.” From increasing access to high quality education and health care, or reducing poverty, the document expresses the signers’ commitment to the wide range of issues multi-issue Catholics hold to be equally sacred.

Here is an excerpt from their statement:

We are proud to be part of the living Catholic tradition — a tradition that unfailingly promotes the common good, expresses a consistent moral framework for life, and highlights the need to provide a collective safety net to those individuals in society who are the most vulnerable. As legislators in the U.S. House of Representatives, we work every day to advance respect for life and the dignity of every human being. We believe that government has moral purpose.

We are committed to making real the basic principles that are at the heart of Catholic social teaching: helping the poor, disadvantaged, and the oppressed, protecting the least among us, and ensuring that all Americans

of every faith are given meaningful opportunities to share in the blessings of this great country. That commitment is fulfilled in different ways by legislators but includes: reducing the rising rates of poverty, particularly child poverty; increasing access to education for all; pressing for access to universal health care; recognizing the dignity of all humans; and repairing long-standing racial and gender inequities in our society. Each of these issues challenges our obligations as Catholics to community and helping those in need.

We recognize that no political party is perfectly in accord with all aspects of Church doctrine. This fact speaks to the secular nature of American democracy, not the devo-

tion of our democratically elected leaders. Yet we believe we can speak to the fundamental issues that unite us as Catholics and lend our voices to changing the political debate — a debate that often fails to reflect and encompass the depth and complexity of these issues.

*As Catholic Democrats who embrace the vocation and mission of the laity as expressed by the late Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles Laici*, we believe that the Church is the “people of God,” called to be a moral force in the broadest sense. We believe the Church as a community is called to be in the vanguard of creating a more just America and world.*



In his recent book, Pope Francis wrote, “We need politicians who burn with the mission to secure for their people the three Ls of land, lodging, and labor, as well as education and health care. That means politicians with broader horizons

who can open new ways for the people...” To these Members of Congress we say, **thank you for living your sacred vocation as a politician as one who burns with the mission of the common good.**

To see the full statement and list of signers, go to networklobby.org/CatholicCongressLetter

How to Talk about Reparations

We cannot have racial healing in the United States without first repairing the harm caused by the original sin of slavery and the ongoing inequality experienced by millions of Black people from the perpetuation of the racial wealth and income gap, housing discrimination, and disparities in health care. This year, Congress has the historic opportunity to support the passage of H.R.40, the Commission to Study and Develop Reparations Proposals for African Americans Act. This legislation seeks to address and rectify the sinful effects of slavery in the United States.

The work for creating a federal commission to study the impact of slavery began 32 years ago when the late Representative John Conyers first introduced H.R.40. Representative Conyers, and now Representative Sheila Jackson Lee of Texas have introduced this bill in every session of Congress since then. We can each do our part to support the passage of H.R.40 by calling and emailing our legislators, lobbying with NETWORK on Capitol Hill, and most importantly talking with other members of our community about the legislation and clearing up confusion about what H.R.40 truly entails.

H.R.40 would establish a 15-member commission to:

- Study the role of federal and state governments in supporting the institution of slavery.
- Study forms of discrimination in public and private sectors against formerly-enslaved people and their descendants.
- Study the negative impacts of racial and economic discrimination in living African Americans.

The commission would then be responsible for:

- Holding hearings, taking testimony, finding evidence, and issuing subpoenas for witness testimony.



People of faith gather in D.C. to support H.R.40, establishing a Reparations Commission.

- Making recommendations to Congress on appropriate remedies, such as a national apology.
- Making recommendations on ways to educate the public on its findings in order to advance racial healing, understanding, and transformation.

Tips for talking with your community about H.R.40

1. Begin with faith or shared values. Many faith traditions have teachings on repairing wrongs done to one another and working for personal and social reconciliation.
2. Provide examples for how there is precedent for federal policies that created commissions and studied past harms in the United States:
 - A. In 1946, Congress created the Indian Claims Commissions Act to investigate the harms experienced by Native and Indigenous people and pay compensation to any federally recognized tribe for land that had been seized by the United States.
 - B. In 1980, Congress established the Commissions on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians to study the wrongful internment of Japanese citizens during World War II.*
3. Explain the important role of the federal government taking up the work of reparations:
 - A. Distinct harms against Black people have been and continue to be committed at the institutional, local, state, and federal levels. The willingness of local communities to take important steps towards repair does not absolve the federal government from providing redress in its own complicity in government-enabled enslavement and policies that enshrined white supremacy. Congress must recognize this lived reality and establish a commission that allows the United States to face this truth together.

The work for reparations is 400-plus years in the making. We can continue this work by having conversations with our communities on the importance of H.R.40. The only path forward in building the new world we want to see is through naming and addressing injustice and providing reparations so that the harms are no longer repeated.

* Commissions on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians. [congress.gov/congressional-report/111th-congress/house-report/666/1](https://www.congress.gov/congressional-report/111th-congress/house-report/666/1)



Breathing New Life into Our Democracy

With state legislatures proposing and passing harmful voter restrictions and continued distrust in our elections, it is more important than ever to protect our democracy. NETWORK has rallied alongside secular and faith partners to call on Congress to pass the For the People Act (S.1) and the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act (H.R.4).

In early June, people of faith stood on the steps of the United Methodist Church in Washington D.C., imploring the Senate to pass S.1 without letting the filibuster interfere. Rabbi Jonah Pesner, Director of the Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism said, “Passing the For the People Act will not be easy, but progress in dismantling racism and systemic oppression never is. Our future as a multi-racial democracy in which everyone can live safely in freedom and dignity depends on defeating these racially motivated attempts to obstruct the vote.”

Later that day, rallying outside the Supreme Court, Senator Raphael Warnock (D-GA) spoke out against the wave of suppressive voting bills that have been introduced in multiple states, including Georgia. “What they are trying to do in Georgia and all across this country is to squeeze the voices of the people out of their democracy such that they can have minority rule,” he said. “The most important thing we can do in this Congress is pass voting rights because...we might sit in these seats, but we don’t own these seats. They belong to the people and the people ought to be able to determine who represents them.”

At the Black Voters Matter Tour, Luci Baines Johnson, the daughter of the late President Lyndon B. Johnson, urged the passage of S.1 and H.R.4. “Across the country, legislators are writing bills at lightning speed to make it harder for people to vote. Especially for people of color. Especially for people who are poor. Especially for people who are old,” she said. “We need legislation to make it easier for qualified Americans to vote, not harder.”

D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser also spoke about why admitting Washington, D.C. as the nation’s 51st state is a critical voting rights issue. “When you come to this town that is a minority majority and we don’t have two Senators, you are talking about suppressing the Black vote. It’s time for that to end.”

A healthy democracy is our means for creating a better world and therefore a critically important moral issue for this moment. In the words of NETWORK Government Relations Specialist Sr. Quincy Howard, “We understand that democracy is our means of creating our future, of bringing about a better world. A functional, transparent democracy is our only path forward to breathe new life into our nation.”



NETWORK staff and supporters attend the Black Voters Matter tour on the National Mall.



Welcoming New Members of the Board

The NETWORK Lobby and NETWORK Advocates Boards of Directors are pleased to introduce our newest Board members. Get to know Kristine, Jennifer, Michelle, and Vanessa:



Kristine Cooper has been a nonprofit professional for over 20 years. Currently living in New York, she comes to NETWORK with extensive budget and fundraising experience. She brings her own faith practice and a spirit of collaboration, critical thinking, and creative problem solving. She brings with her the tenets of Montessori education philosophy — of valuing people, grace, courtesy, and respect — that she sees to reflect our Sister-Spirit principles.



Jennifer Owens-Jofré is an academic and administrator who has studied Catholic theology from Latinx perspectives. In the last five years, she has committed herself to anti-racist work in both personal and professional settings. She has taught Catholic social teaching in high schools, parishes, and a university, and made it a central part of her Confirmation curriculum when she served as a lay ecclesial minister in the Diocese of Oakland. She is also a second-generation Bolivian-American woman, and part of the first generation of women in her family to go to college.



Michelle Scott has extensive experience as both a legal professional and volunteer in the nonprofit sector. She is a practicing Catholic living in New York with a long career in a variety of spaces. She has undertaken legal and management responsibilities as the General Counsel/Chief Legal Officer and Board Secretary for U.S. operating nonprofits and international nonprofits. Her volunteer activities have included board and pro bono counsel work for diverse charitable organizations and she have served on voting rights protection teams in general elections.



Vanessa Wibberley Denier is the founder of two nonprofits and a community organizer. Vanessa is a subject expert in Catholic social teaching, liberation theology, and the moral theology of Vatican II. She has followed NETWORK and Nuns on the Bus since graduate school and participated in many of NETWORK's virtual events. In Cincinnati, she works in her community on racial disparities in health, affordable housing, and environmental justice. She has extensive experience in social justice-oriented nonprofit development and communication.

Announcing NETWORK's First Deputy Executive Director and Chief Equity Officer

Joan F. Neal recently became NETWORK's first Deputy Executive Director and Chief Equity Officer where she will bring her proven leadership and management experience to NETWORK's mission and organizational development. Prior to serving in this role, Joan made significant contributions to NETWORK as a consultant for strategic planning and racial justice, and as a Government Relations Fellow advocating for reforms of the U.S. criminal legal system.

According to Joan, NETWORK "has been a groundbreaking advocacy organization for nearly 50 years, laying a moral claim on the soul of our nation by equipping Catholic Sisters and NETWORK supporters to directly lobby their elected officials." Joan is an Associate Member of the National Black Sisters Conference, and holds a Master of Arts in Pastoral Studies from the Catholic Theological Union where she is also a Life Trustee. She also currently serves as a member of the Board of the Sister Thea Bowman Foundation along with other Boards. Mary Novak said, "I am thrilled to have Joan on our leadership team as NETWORK enters its next chapter."





Praying and Fasting for a Pathway to Citizenship

Immigrants Declare 'We Are Essential' in Washington

Dozens of activists gathered to pray and fast two blocks from the U.S. Capitol Building throughout the month of June, calling on Congress to create a pathway to citizenship for 11 million undocumented community members — many of whom have kept our families and our communities functioning as essential workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Faith leaders and directly impacted immigrants organized this gathering — the **#WeAreEssential Fast for Freedom** — to shine a spotlight on our moral obligation to fully and finally include our immigrant siblings in our national community.

NETWORK members across the country committed to days of fasting and other actions in solidarity with this important campaign and NETWORK Executive Director Mary J. Novak visited and prayed with fasters at the kickoff event and throughout the course of the campaign. She prayed:

Loving God,

We come together in thanksgiving for your bringing our siblings safely on their journey to this land in search of a safe and fruitful life. You guided their path here, Oh Compassionate God.

Open our hearts now as we listen to your Word through the rich experiences of those you gathered here tonight, so we can commit to work together for a path to citizenship to finish and honor your work of bringing us together.

Guide us, Merciful God, in our work together. We ask you to strengthen our voices, to give us the courage to speak out strongly when your commandment to love the neighbor and your invitation to welcome the stranger are so easily dismissed.

Protect all of us who are in hiding and in fear because of the lack of the security of citizenship. Help us be your face, hands, and feet, help us be a dwelling place, a community of care to each other.

We ask you, Gracious God, to ground us in your inclusive love, so we may stand firmly against the abusive actions that tear families apart across human-made borders. Unite and bless us in this struggle, give us your strength when we are weary and your compassion when we are low, until every person you called to come here has a path to citizenship and is made to feel secure and cared for as you intended.

We ask this in your Holy Name.

Amen.



“We are all connected. One human family. As a country, we have forgotten that. I will be fasting and praying for a change of heart among our elected officials.”

SR. MARY WALZ, DC — DURANT, MS

“Undocumented immigrants deserve just and equitable treatment and a path to citizenship.”

PATRICIA SCHECHER — ST. JAMES, NY

“It is long overdue that our immigrant population of essential workers who provide food for our tables have a pathway to citizenship, fair wages, health care, and housing.”

SR. MARY MONTGOMERY, SP — ST. MARY-OF-THE-WOODS, IN

Senate Vote Delays Democracy Reform, House Considers Bill to Study Reparations

An update from D.C. on key developments during the past quarter, and social justice issues on the horizon



Key Vote: Democracy Reform

In June, the Senate had the opportunity to begin debate on S.1, the For the People Act, a bill that would protect democracy and voting rights. Instead, Senator Mitch McConnell led the effort to block even talking about these important issues, resulting in a 50-50 procedural Senate vote. As this “cloture” vote needed 60 votes to pass, Senator McConnell and other Senate Republicans’ votes succeeded in blocking consideration of S.1.

The For the People Act (S.1) is a bold, bipartisan democracy reform bill that would end voter disenfranchisement and bolster our electoral system. NETWORK’s work on S.1 continues this summer, as well as our push for the Senate to eliminate its arbitrary rule of requiring a 60-vote majority for procedural decisions that allows a minority of Senators to filibuster legislation that has the support of a majority of the country. The filibuster has been used throughout U.S. history to block and delay civil rights bills since Reconstruction — and more recently has been used to keep people in poverty, allow vulnerable families to go hungry, and deny people access to health care.



On the Horizon: Reparations Commission

Before Congress breaks for their summer recess, NETWORK is calling on the House to pass H.R.40, the Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act. In April, the House Judiciary Committee took an extraordinary step by passing H.R.40 out of Committee. Passing this legislation, first out of committee, then in the House, has been in the works by policymakers for more than 30 years.

H.R.40 would establish a federal commission to examine the legacy of enslavement in the U.S., including ongoing racial discrimination, and then recommend proposals for repair. This bill does not authorize payments or any other specific remedy.

The bill has unprecedented support and momentum in Congress with more than 190 cosponsors in the House and 22 Senators in support of its companion bill in the Senate. The Biden administration is also supportive of passing this legislation in Congress. Congress has an opportunity to make history by bringing H.R.40 to the House floor for a vote, which NETWORK hopes to make happen this summer.



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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- Bridget Flood (Treasurer)
- Robbie Pentecost, OSF (Secretary)
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- Vanessa Wibberley Denier
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- Anne Li
- Sarah Marin
- Alejandra Marroquin
- Jennifer Owens-Jofré
- Ann Scholz, SSND
- Michelle Scott
- Erin Zubal, OSU

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- Ann Scholz, SSND
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- Meg Olson, Emily TeKolste, SP

FELLOWS

- Nancy Groth, Eilis McCulloh, Patricia Sodo



Help us grow our community by passing this issue of *Connection* to a loved one!

Inspired by the principles of Catholic Social Justice, we are called to be in solidarity with all people, especially those who are struggling, respect workers, uphold the dignity of each person as equally valuable, and prioritize the good of community and creation. **Together**, we can build a healthier, stronger nation.

Now more than ever, you can help us organize a robust coalition of people in your community who want to build our country anew and envision a just and inclusive society.

Pass this *Connection* on to a friend who may not be aware of NETWORK and share our mutual passion with your own network!

Share with them how their voices can be heard by writing letters to the editor, contacting their members of Congress, participating in educational workshops, joining local activist teams, and promoting legislative advocacy in their own community! And of course, they will receive their own annual subscription to our quarterly *Connection* magazine.

Let your loved ones and friends know that there are a few ways to become a member:

- Make an annual investment of \$50 online at www.networklobby.org/donate or by using the envelope inside this issue.
- Join the GEM (Give Every Month) Program by becoming a recurring donor.
- Give a gift membership to others in your community to expand the reach and impact of our mission!
- Join the Bread and Roses Society through planned giving.

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

For any questions please contact India-Grace Kellogg at 202-601-7866 or ikellogg@networklobby.org



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Celebrating Pride with Blessings for the LGBTQ+ Community

In honor of Pride month, NETWORK accepted DignityUSA's invitation to write blessings for members of the LGBTQ+ community. As DignityUSA wrote, blessing does not come from hierarchies of power and control. It comes from the love and support that authentic communities pour out on one another.

May the Spirit of our Creator reveal the truth to all that all love is the work of God's hands, blessed and sacred. May we each open our eyes and align our hearts to our sacred call to love without condition.



Laura Peralta-Schulte

Chief Lobbyist, NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice

May all in our LGBTQ+ community feel the blessing of the Creator's embrace, the warmth of hospitality from others, and the freedom to live authentically and thrive.



Sister Quincy Howard, OP

Government Relations Specialist, NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice

