



NETWORK CONNECTION

FOURTH QUARTER 2021



CORNERSTONES OF THE COMMON GOOD



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ON THE COVER

Sister Emily TeKolste, SP speaks at an interfaith event in support of a bold, faithful budget reconciliation package in Washington, D.C. in September 2021. Photo by Julia Morris, NETWORK Lobby.

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Grounded in NETWORK's Treasured Past, We Build Anew

Now Is the Time to Build Back Better Together

MARY J. NOVAK, NETWORK EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

We are now seeing the enormous possibility of President Biden's administration and the 117th Congress become real policy proposals. This is seen particularly in the budget legislation for the Build Back Better plan, part of the administration's "new New Deal." Soon, we will know if our hard work to get this plan into law and implemented has been successful. When NETWORK's calls to action go out, you show up. Thank you for your calls to your members of Congress, lobby visits, letters to the editor, educational programs in the community, rallies, and vigils to get us to this point. This is sacred work and we are grateful to you for your witness.

With all the excitement about the transformational possibilities in this administration's Build Back Better plan, we are also keeping a close eye on the movements seeking to undercut them. Namely, we are monitoring the attacks on our democracy unfolding throughout the country after last year's historic voter turnout, especially from Black and Brown communities. Let me add my deep appreciation to all of you who have taken action to build the pressure to pass legislation that would make the promise of our democracy real for us all. The great potential of Build Back Better cannot take hold without this corresponding structural work to ensure our fundamental freedom to vote remains available to all.


Undergirding NETWORK's political ministry is the tradition of Catholic Social Justice imbedded in everything NETWORK has done since its inception almost 50 years ago. This rich tradition is opened in this issue of Connection with expositions of the four cornerstones grounding NETWORK's Build Anew agenda: (1) dismantling systemic racism, (2) cultivating inclusive community, (3) rooting our economy in solidarity, and (4) transforming our politics.

Three theologians and a former legislator whose praxis is deeply formed by the Catholic Social Justice tradition share their integrated insights to deepen our commitment and inspire us to continue to engage during this time of great possibility and threat. Their reflections about the pressing need to reverse the effects of systemic racism, ensure our economy promotes flourishing, value human development in community, and act boldly with a people-centered politics are both perceptive and forward-looking.

The great potential of Build Back Better cannot take hold without this corresponding structural work to ensure our fundamental freedom to vote remains available to all.

As the NETWORK staff builds the momentum with our members across the country and engages in political ministry on Capitol Hill, we are also working to ensure we are advancing racial equity with our internal culture, policies, and practices. This is mission critical for us — especially at this 50-year mark — as we reflect on the past and begin to dream about the future. I am grateful to have Joan Neal as a partner and member of NETWORK's leadership team in this internal justice work as well as our strategic planning.

NETWORK is also preparing for a memorable year of celebrating our 50th Anniversary. When I arrived, I learned that a member of NETWORK's staff, Sister Mara Rutten RSM, is a professional historian. To my delight, Mara agreed to redirect her efforts this year and her work is now dedicated to studying NETWORK's past. She will be sharing the fruits of her labors with us all throughout the coming year.

For NETWORK's 50th Anniversary, we are planning a year of programs, videos, gatherings, new publications, and much more. To begin the anniversary year this fall, we will look back at the founding of NETWORK. As the 50th Anniversary year continues to unfold, NETWORK will both celebrate our treasured history and invite you into a bold and bright future. Thank you for being part of our treasure; we look forward to celebrating with you and moving into the future together. 

NOTABLE QUOTABLES

What justice-seekers have been saying this quarter

"Now that we have again demonstrated what grassroots movements are capable of, there is no limit to what we can do."

Rep. Cori Bush (MO-01) writing for CNN Opinion
"I slept on the Capitol steps because I've been evicted three times in my life"

"The richest people on Earth should pay more than \$0 in federal income taxes. Period."

Senator Bernie Sanders (@SenSanders) tweeting as Congress debates changes to the tax code

"We can afford to offer every low-income child the full benefits of the child tax credit — and we can afford to pay for it. Doing less hurts them, and us, all."

Robert Rubin, Former Treasury Secretary, writing about the expanded Child Tax Credit in the Washington Post

"A moral budget will be built on a high moral standard... Who determines our values?"

Corporations or people?
Our politics or our faith?"

Rev. Carlos Malavé speaking at "Moral Principles, National Priorities, Budget Choices," hosted by Georgetown University

"It would finally mean that everybody in the country has a voice in the government and that our elected leaders listened to our voices."

Sister Carmella Campion, SSJ speaking about the importance of passing legislation to protect our democracy in Wheeling, West Virginia

"Passing immigration reform that respects the dignity and worth of all immigrants is also a recognition of their contribution to our economy."

Senator Alex Padilla (D-CA) speaking during a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing "Immigrant Farmworkers are Essential to Feeding America"

"We ask that there be more oversight [of Customs and Border Protection] by Congress and the Administration."

NETWORK Government Relations Director Ronnate Asirwatham quoted in Catholic News Service

"World leaders have a decision. Are they going to protect pharmaceutical companies' profits or share vaccine technology and end the pandemic?"

Laura Peralta-Schulte, NETWORK Chief Lobbyist, speaking on importance of global vaccines in RNS interview

"The U.S. government has historically designed policies around White Americans' experiences of homeownership, marriage and paying for college — to the detriment of the majority of Black Americans."

Professor Dorothy A. Brown writing about how the tax code perpetuates the racial wealth and income gap in the Washington Post

"Racism is present in our laws, economy, and society and we must address it in federal policy."

Sister Erin Zubal, OSU, Chair of the NETWORK Advocates Board, speaking during NETWORK's "Our Multi-Issue Lives: Being a Catholic Justice-Seeker Today" event

"If all women in the United States, including Native women, received equal pay, it would cut poverty for working women in half—and add billions to our GDP."

Reps. Sharice Davids (KS-03) and Melanie Stansbury (NM-01) published in a joint Op-ed on msmagazine.com for Native Women's Equal Pay Day (September 8)

Remembering That We Are Connected

Four Cornerstones Call Us to Promote Flourishing and the Common Good

Emerging from encounter with families and communities, NETWORK's Build Anew Agenda is a legislative pathway to realizing our vision of a just and inclusive society. NETWORK believes that building our country anew rests on four cornerstones. Here, we invite four thinkers and activists to reflect on these cornerstones against the backdrop of today's challenges.

Among the most crucial theological commitments that Catholic Social Justice calls us to is the radical dignity and equality of all persons, which flows from our having all been created in the image and likeness of God. This calls us to be in solidarity with all people, especially those who are struggling or pushed to the

margins of our society. Because of this, public policies must give special attention to the needs of those whose dignity has been harmed and overlooked. And in the contemporary United States, it is disingenuous to think about marginalization without naming the ongoing struggles against racism and white supremacy.

The contributions below from Dr. Craig Ford, Vanessa Wibberley Denier, Dr. Kate Ward, and Tom Perriello unpack the theological commitments motivating our work in the public square and show how the principles of Catholic Social Justice inform our work in 2021 and beyond.

— Edited by Patrick Hornbeck



DISMANTLE SYSTEMIC RACISM

By Dr. Craig A. Ford, Jr.

Structural racism is an attack on the human dignity and lives of people of color in the United States. It is present in our laws, or economy, and our society and must be named and addressed in federal policy.

Simply defined, systemic racism refers to the totality of the effects of racist actions and beliefs embedded in a society when those effects are distributed across racial groups. When we observe racialized disparities in society's institutions, resources, and legal protections, what we are observing are manifestations of systemic racism. *Systemic* rather than *intentional*, these forms of racism occur regardless of whether any particular individual admits to discriminating on the basis of race or to espousing racist beliefs. We can identify systemic forms of racism simply by studying the correlations between the conditions for living a flourishing, healthy, and fulfilling life and being identified as having a particular racial identity.

Though many examples can be offered, let us look at just one, which comes to us by way of the U.S. Federal Reserve. The 2019 Survey of Consumer Finances valued the median wealth of white families at \$188,220. By contrast, the median wealth of Black and Hispanic/Latinx families were only \$24,100, and \$36,100, respectively, *meaning that a typical white family possesses nearly eight times the wealth of a Black family, and over five times the wealth of a Latinx family.* Data like this indicates



the presence of systemic racism because wealth correlates with other goods needed to live a dignified life. These goods include education and health, to say nothing about the ability to weather economic downturns caused by market cycles or global pandemics. Simply by being white in the United States, one is more likely to be more educated, healthier, and richer.

This is devastating, because race should not matter when it comes to being educated, being generally healthy, or being able to avoid poverty. (For 2021, the poverty line for a family of four is \$26,500, only \$2,400 greater than the median wealth of Black families.) For this reason, our moral call to address systemic racism requires implementing policies and other forms of redress (including reparations) to reverse its effects, in short to dismantle it.

(continued on page 6)

Those of us who identify as Catholic should be among the first to support such anti-racist policies. The U.S. bishops have repeatedly identified racism as an evil we must work against. Moreover, the tradition of Catholic social teaching — particularly our commitment to making a preferential option for the poor and vulnerable — summons us to take decisive, concrete action against the socioeconomic evils that follow in systemic racism’s wake. Such redress will ultimately redound to the common good, which Catholic social teaching defines as the sum total of conditions that allow for the flourishing of all.

Even if we address systemic racism, much work remains to be done. But with any hope, by addressing this form of evil, we will also undercut the intentional forms of racism, like prejudice and bias, discrimination, and violence, that feed upon it. We must, as always, pray to and partner with God to advance our capacity to dismantle all the evils that affect the lives of people of color. These extend beyond racism to include homophobia, transphobia, sexism, xenophobia, and ableism — though the list, like our work, is hardly complete.

CULTIVATE INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY

By Vanessa Wibberley Denier

As the COVID-19 pandemic has shown, we are all connected to one another and our health, wellbeing, and lives depend on one another. We cannot make policy decisions from an individualistic, self-serving perspective and we cannot choose individuals or groups to exclude from our care; doing so only harms our national community.

The dignity of the human person is the fundamental commitment animating Catholic social teaching. This principle grounds our tradition in the “good news” of the Gospel, the saving message of God’s love for all. Yet we can only recognize and celebrate the dignity of all persons within life-affirming relationships. Imagine the human person at the center of a set of concentric circles, starting from the family and radiating outward. Wider circles include our friends and co-workers, our communities and institutions, and even the strangers who live in our city or town.

Sometimes in our social and political conversations, we fail to recognize the dignity of the person-in-community. Other times, we neglect to honor this principle in making policy. When we overlook each person’s interconnectedness to every other, to the human community, and to God’s creation, we fail to accept our shared responsibility for creating conditions not just for human survival, but for human flourishing. The result is the persistence of social and economic structures of exclusion, oppression, underdevelopment, and inequity.

From a Catholic social justice perspective, educating and lobbying for an inclusive national community means affirming the human dignity of others — even those who are different from ourselves — and working to close the historical and structural gaps responsible for suffering that continues into our own day. Building communities of inclusion anew requires a spirituality and social critique capable of identifying “value gaps” and organizing for corrective public policies. Cultivating inclusionary communities is part and parcel of a political ministry and an active praxis. It is



an organizing principle that expresses an unsentimental love of neighbor and demands integral justice and authentic peace.

Integral development is a distinctively Catholic reassessment of economic development. Just like national budgets can be both moral and immoral documents, so also economic development can impede or impel authentic human development — as when governments leave economic development to market structures alone. And lest we forget the interdependence of humanity and the non-human world, Pope Francis has expanded the theme of integral development to embrace ecology.

By emphasizing integral development, Pope Francis invites us to embrace a positive attitude towards the church’s work in the modern world. Holding together diversity and unity, and standing comfortably within democratic pluralism, integral development differs starkly from the competing Catholic political philosophy known as integralism. Integralism, which seeks to impose church authority over against the secular state, is at best suspicious and at worst contemptuous of modern liberal societies. There is also a clear difference between a state-imposed

“peace” pressed into the service of a looming nationalism and an authentic peace born from integral justice achieved democratically and in the service of human community.

In 1963, Pope John XXIII wrote *Pacem in Terris* (*Peace on Earth*). He insisted that individuals and countries cannot seek their own interests in isolation. Today that is clearer than ever, as we continue to live through the mass illness and death

COVID-19 has caused across the U.S. and around the world. Pope John called all people to take an active role in public life in order to preserve the universal and inviolable rights of every person, foster the common good, and create together a social order “founded on truth, built according to justice, vivified and integrated by charity, and put into practice in freedom.” These words capture what it means to cultivate inclusive community.

ROOT OUR ECONOMY IN SOLIDARITY

By Dr. Kate Ward

The economy and our political system shape the society in which we live with one another. Therefore, our economy must be based on solidarity and recognize the injustices of a system that fails to meet so many peoples’ basic human needs.

Solidarity is a commitment to making the concerns of other people our own, acknowledging the truth that our well-being is bound up with that of others. Catholics pursue solidarity in order to act on our deep belief that God made, and continues to make, us one. While social, structural, and personal sin interferes with our efforts to achieve full solidarity with one another, we continue to pursue it as God’s dream for humanity.

In the zero-sum economy we inhabit today, essential goods are easy to access for those well off and difficult to attain for those in poverty. These necessities include first-order needs such as housing, food, and medical care, as well as less obvious ones like education, physical safety, community trust, a real voice in government, and the ability to enjoy health and longevity. Our economic power shapes so many of our life prospects, and that power is unequally distributed — not coincidentally, but according to the dominant structures that shape our economy.

An economy rooted in the realization that our wellbeing is bound up together would be one where all people share risks and also rewards. Workers would share in the wealth they create, instead of the fruits of their labor flowing to a few at the very top. Ordinary people would have financial security during unemployment, illness, or economic downturn, instead of only the well-off sailing through these common economic shocks. Extractive business practices that prey on the most vulnerable would cease, whether through publicity, public shaming, or the rule of law. Work of all sorts would command just wages and humane conditions, which are rights of every worker, not luxuries for the most educated or well-connected. Educators and care workers would receive



the respect and compensation that comes with recognizing their work as the foundation of all economic activity. Solidarity means even people who are not working can afford to meet their basic needs, because there are legitimate reasons to be outside the waged workforce and also because proximity to waged work is not the condition for basic human dignity. The environmental costs of economic production, which impact human health and livelihood, would be borne equitably when they cannot be eliminated.

In short, rooting our economy in solidarity means designing an environment where our earning, spending, borrowing, and saving contribute to others’ flourishing, rather than coming at the expense of someone else’s poverty, danger, precarity or displacement.

We can alter our economy through individual acts of buying or boycott, but Catholics also believe that government acts on behalf of the people and should reflect their priorities and values. “Solidarity means much more than engaging in sporadic acts of generosity,” Pope Francis wrote in *Fratelli Tutti*. “It also means combatting the structural causes of poverty, inequality, the lack of work, land and housing, the denial of social and labor rights.” To make the concerns of others our own, we must work to understand the structural forces that harm our neighbors and insist our elected representatives build more just structures that promote the wellbeing of all.

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TRANSFORM OUR POLITICS

By Tom Perriello

Our political system is skewed, rewarding voter suppression and polarization. It spreads division and exclusion instead of true inclusion and representation. We have a sacred and ethical obligation to create a democracy that is fair, transparent, and accountable and honors the human dignity of every person.

Our country is in urgent need of political transformation. Partisan divides have deepened and merged alarmingly with cultural and racial divides. These chasms make space for even deeper dangers — the erosion of democratic norms, truth, the common good, and common agreement that disputes are settled at the ballot box or in the courts, not by mob threats or even violence. Our political cycles now come with death tolls — from a synagogue in Pittsburgh to a Walmart in El Paso, from the streets of Charlottesville to the spike of COVID-19 deaths in red states.

The agenda now before Congress — from voting rights and election integrity to pathways to citizenship and paid leave — need not be partisan. These reforms enjoy support from large majorities of Americans, who are desperate for policies that make their lives more affordable and secure. The United States would benefit from two parties committed to solving our problems together. The irony is, however, that the 50 Democratic Senators who represent the vast majority of people living in the United States also reflect the ideological, regional, and racial diversity of their constituents. The consensus they are reaching within the Democratic caucus would have more than met the “bipartisan” test of earlier eras.

When I came to Congress, I represented a deep red district and believed that bipartisanship was possible. I was proud to retain support from independent and Republican voters and outperform the party brand by double digits. But unlike at home, I found no bipartisanship on Capitol Hill. When the thirst for re-election trumps the ethics of public service, then finding win-win solutions with the other side stops making sense.

Some of the loudest voices for bridging our divides today come from those who helped to create them not too long ago. Those who represented a corporate centrism of earlier eras and had too much control over both parties helped to fuel the populist bases of each that now drive us further apart. Offering well-worn, incremental solutions, fails to meet the real needs of families who are far more than a small tax credit away from paying the bills. The solutions that will bring us together are ones that



act boldly to meet the present moment. Watering down reform on corruption, clean water, or child care does not strengthen support from Republican, Democratic, or independent voters. It only fuels their cynicism. Had we held our ground on the bolder version of Obamacare that first passed the House during my time in Congress, today we would have a robust public option and cheaper drug prices that every U.S. voter would understand and appreciate.

Bold solutions require political courage. We need candidates and parties willing to fight for everyday folks. To call out injustice where we see it. To call out racism where we see it. And to call out missed opportunities where we see them. When we are bold, when we are progressive, we win. And we change the measure of success in politics by doing so.

My faith has called me to a life of service — as an activist, Congressman, diplomat, teacher, and peace negotiator. I have not always succeeded but have never regretted it when I put the common good first, when my faith gave me the courage to take risks, when justice demanded that we look beyond the incremental to the transformational. Our politics needs leaders across all sectors who will call us to our better angels and create an economy of care and a people-centered politics. Politics is not a game. It is a matter of life or death for too many. We must each do our part to meet this moment. ☀️

Cornerstones of the Build a New Agenda

Inspired by the principles of Catholic Social Justice — which call us 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 — these cornerstones are the foundation for NETWORK’s political advocacy to build our country anew in 2021 and beyond.

Dismantle Systemic Racism

Structural racism is an attack on the human dignity and lives of people of color in the United States. It is present in our laws, or economy, and our society and must be named and addressed in federal policy.

Cultivate Inclusive Community

As the COVID-19 pandemic has shown, we are all connected to one another and our health, wellbeing, and lives depend on one another. We cannot make policy decisions from an individualistic, self-serving perspective and we cannot chose individuals or groups to exclude from our care; doing so only harms our national community.

Root Our Economy in Solidarity

The economy and our political system shape the society in which we live with one another. Therefore, our economy must be based on solidarity and recognize the injustices of a system that fails to meet so many peoples’ basic human needs.

Transform Our Politics

Our political system is skewed, rewarding voter suppression and polarization. It spreads division and exclusion instead of true inclusion and representation. We have a sacred and ethical obligation to create a democracy that is fair, transparent, and accountable and honors the human dignity of every person.



About the Authors



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Vanessa Wibberley Denier is an independent Catholic political theologian who is founder of The American Communion Project and a NETWORK Board member.



Tom Perriello is a former congressional representative from Virginia’s 5th Congressional District and a former U.S. Special Envoy for the African Great Lakes Region. He now serves as the U.S. Executive Director of the Open Society Foundations.



Equity, Not Equality, Is the Christian Ideal

Sister Emily TeKolste, SP

At a recent gathering of Giving Voice sisters, one of our Dominican sisters stood up and described equity by comparing it to the Rule of St. Augustine that Dominican congregations follow, which reads: “Food and clothing shall be distributed ... not equally to all, for all do not enjoy equal health, but rather according to each one’s need.” The rule points to Scripture: “For so you read in the Acts of the Apostles that ‘they had all things in common and distribution was made to each one according to each one’s need (Acts 4:32-35).”

For much of my life — especially growing up in a mostly white suburb of Indianapolis — conversations centered on equality, not equity, as the ideal. I heard so much about the importance of equality: the founding declaration of the U.S. that “All men are created equal,” a regular focus on the so-called “equality of opportunity” and equal treatment, and so on. It was easy for our mostly white, mostly homeowner parents to embrace that narrative without realizing the ways that their whiteness, homeownership, and the tax code automatically gave them benefits most Black families couldn’t access.

Over the past several months, I have been leading interactive workshops about the intersection of racial justice and the tax code. My colleagues at Network Lobby for Catholic Social Justice and I have trained more than 250 people in the complex realities of the U.S. tax code and the ways it protects white wealth at the expense of Black, Latinx, Asian American and Pacific Islanders, Native American communities, and all working people.

These policies are not just innocent byproducts of complicated federal policy. Over the first 13 months of the pandemic, billionaires grew their wealth by 55%, or \$1.6 trillion in extra wealth. Meanwhile, millions of people are still fighting to avoid eviction, hundreds of thousands have died, and many states have blocked unemployment insurance payments specifically to force people to return to work at dangerous jobs in the middle of a pandemic.

During the workshop, when we work with the Tax Justice Calculator and look at policies that could begin to fix the tax code, we inevitably hear pure shock from workshop participants about the vast amount of revenue we could raise. By

implementing just two new tax policies aimed at the ultra-rich and fully funding the IRS to crack down on tax evasion on the top 1%, we could pay for massive improvements to our social infrastructure. We could expand Medicaid in states that refused expansion under the Affordable Care Act, adequately fund public schools, provide a tax credit for family caregivers, and still have money left over.

Studying this data, I’ve become convinced: There truly is enough to go around.

When both a billionaire and someone who works for minimum wage have to rent an apartment for \$3,000 a month, that’s equality of opportunity, but it leaves the minimum wage worker homeless on the street. Equity says that is not enough. We must look at our society critically and make sure that everyone truly has access to a safe and decent place to live.

As I reflect on equity, I realize how closely it aligns with our Catholic and Christian notions of human dignity. With an equity lens, we see that it is actually an injustice to ignore social, political, and economic systems, our history, and our own individual abilities, needs, and circumstances. Refusing to consider these realities ignores the very image of God that resides in each of us as individuals.

I believe that love, like equity, demands both that we meet each other’s needs and that we contribute to the common good according to our ability.

This is central to the call of our faith and to the lived reality of the Ten Commandments in our modern times. As Pope Francis says in *Evangelii Gaudium*, “Today we also have to say ‘thou shalt not’ to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills.”

Let us each commit — individually and together — to creating a society shaped around acting as Jesus’s apostles did when they shared their loves and fish. When everyone contributed, there was more than enough to go around. Don’t you want to live in a society like that? I know I do.

This is an excerpt from Sister Emily’s full column published in Global Sisters Report on September 17, 2021. Read more at www.networklobby.org/equity.



Celebrating Sister-Spirit: Our 50-Year Justice Journey

Fifty years ago, Catholic Sisters gathered in Washington, D.C. and the spark that would become NETWORK was ignited. Shortly after that gathering in December 1971, NETWORK opened its doors in April the following year.

With your help, NETWORK has grown from a small lobby of Catholic Sisters to an organization that reaches thousands of justice-seekers across the country. Throughout five decades and 10 presidents, NETWORK has advocated for federal policies that promote the common good.

We look forward to celebrating our rich past and continuing to educate, organize, and lobby for racial and economic justice with you into the future!

HELP CELEBRATE — SAVE THE DATES!

VIRTUAL KICK-OFF EVENT

Friday, December 17, 2021
8:00 PM Eastern/5:00 PM Pacific

50th ANNIVERSARY GALA

Spring 2022, Washington, D.C.
More information to come!

Learn More:

www.networklobby.org/50thAnniversary



Calling on President Biden to End the Immoral Misuse of Title 42

Ahead of the 107th World Day for Migrants and Refugees, NETWORK joined with the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc., or CLINIC to organize a letter signed by 165 Catholic organizations across the country demanding President Biden end the misuse of Title 42. The letter concludes, “We cannot absolve ourselves of our sacred responsibility to care for our migrant siblings.” Notable signatories include: Call to Action, Jesuit Refugee Service/USA, Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, National Black Sisters’ Conference, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, U.S. Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph, Pax Christi USA, Kino Border Initiative, Hope Border Institute, the Center for Social Concerns at the University of Notre Dame, Catholic Charities Atlanta, and more.

Unfortunately, the Biden administration continues to support this immoral misuse of Title 42, which puts migrants’ lives at risk at our border.



Activists gather outside the White House to call on President Biden to end the continued misuse of Title 42

Email the White House to end the misuse of Title 42 at www.networklobby.org/title42email



NETWORK Team Democracy Rallies Support

Whatever our party or zip code or race, we all want a say in the decisions that impact our lives. But a small number of partisan actors are trying to sow distrust in our elections and pass bills that restrict voting. We have an important opportunity to transform our political system into one that realizes the true promise of democracy — *a government of the people, by the people, and for the people.*

Through July and August, NETWORK justice-seekers raised their voices and took action to strengthen our freedom to vote. Under the banner of “Team Democracy,” hundreds of people across the country called on their Senators support the right to vote.

Since then, a new bill has been introduced, the Freedom to Vote Act, which includes many of the same protections as the original For the People Act and has widespread support in Congress. The Freedom to Vote Act helps dismantle barriers erected to keep Black, Native American, young, and new voters from voting, including long lines and eliminated polling places, targeted restrictions to registration, and overt voter intimidation. NETWORK supports the new Freedom to Vote Act and urges President Biden and the Senate to make passing this legislation a priority.

Together we can realize a democracy that represents, reflects, and responds to all of us.



Sisters at the Sacred Heart Convent in Hempstead, New York carrying the torch for democracy.



Sisters in Tucson, Arizona address the press after presenting a letter signed by thousands of religious women across the country to Arizona’s Senators Mark Kelly and Kyrsten Sinema urging the Senate to pass federal democracy reform.



In Monroe, Michigan, the IHM Sisters and the Stronger Together Huddle organized a “Relay to the Ballot Box” where participants carried ballots and had to get through hurdles along the way to the ballot box near City Hall.



Virginia NETWORK Advocates Team members inform their fellow Virginians about federal legislation to protect the freedom to vote at their local farmers market.





for Needed Legislation



The Sisters of St. Joseph in Cleveland and the Cleveland NETWORK Advocates Team rally to protect the freedom to vote in Ohio.



Indiana Catholic Sisters and broad coalition of other concerned Hoosiers host a "Carry the Torch of Democracy" rally at Monument Circle in Indianapolis.



Sisters of St. Joseph of Brentwood deliver a letter supporting legislation to protect the freedom to vote signed by more than 3,685 Catholic Sisters to Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer's office in Long Island, New York.

Sister Arlene Writes for Justice

In the 1970s, Sister Arlene Welding, a School Sister of St. Francis, attended a NETWORK legislative seminar on Justice and Peace. At the seminar, Sister Arlene learned how to write an effective Letter to the Editor. Since then, she has had hundreds of her Letters to the Editor (LTEs) published in papers across the country in the pursuit of justice.

Sister Arlene grew up in Elgin, Nebraska and spent many of the years she was active with NETWORK in Los Angeles. After living in Los Angeles, Sister Arlene moved to Tennessee and had a majority of her LTEs published in *The Tennessean*. Her Letters to the Editor covered a myriad of topics, from democracy reform, tax justice, housing, economic inequality, and more.

One of Sister Arlene's most notable Letters to the Editor addressed the injustice of U.S. policies in Central America in the late 1980s. Her letter received attention of the local Ku Klux Klan, and Sister Arlene received a death threat in the mail. She turned the letter over to police authorities, and as a result, the police ordered the cancellation of a local Klan rally. In response to the situation, Sister Arlene said, "I'm a very political person. I just can't keep silent on it. I will continue to speak to groups and write letters. I won't let this threat interfere with what I have to do."

Sister Arlene is a shining example of how writing a Letter to the Editor is an incredibly effective advocacy tool. NETWORK members and advocates all over the U.S. still continue the practice of writing Letters to the Editor to advance our Build Anew agenda.

Sister Arlene Welding, SSSF, currently resides in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and recently celebrated her 100th birthday.

An excerpt from one of Sr. Arlene's Letters to the Editor:

Our economic system is in need of reform

"Virtually every time jobs are cut, the value of the company goes up on Wall Street and the salaries of top executives go up.' Can we not see the injustice of our economic system where the disparity between the rich and the poor is scandalously widening, the most serious issue of our time? We are harming our treasured democracy, our future, and our children. We are producing a society of extremes."

The Tennessean 2000

Democracy Legislation Passes in the House, Budget Reconciliation Opens New Possibilities

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



Key Vote: John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act



On the Horizon: Budget Reconciliation

On Tuesday, August 24, 2021, the House of Representatives passed the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act (H.R.4) in a 219-212 vote. Passing H.R.4 is a key priority for our agenda (along with the newly introduced Freedom to Vote Act). The John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act would restore federal election oversight against racially discriminatory rules after the Supreme Court gutted the Voting Rights Act in its 2013 *Shelby County* decision. Both H.R.4 and the Freedom to Vote Act are urgently needed to transform our political system into a democracy that represents, reflects, and responds to all voters.

Speaker Pelosi is prioritizing these bills in response to this summer's *Brnovich v. Democratic National Committee* Supreme Court decision, which further undercut protections of the original 1965 Voting Rights Act. Now that the redistricting process has begun in earnest across the country, there is an added urgency to pass federal legislation, like the Freedom to Vote Act, which will protect against racially discriminatory gerrymandering. Despite the Voting Rights Act's long history of bipartisan support, H.R.4 ultimately passed in the House along party lines—a discouraging “first” that is indicative of the changing partisan landscape. NETWORK continues our work with the Senate to ensure passage of the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act and the Freedom to Vote Act.

NETWORK Lobby continues calling on Congress to pass President Biden's Build Back Better plan through the budget reconciliation process. The Build Back Better plan will transform communities across the country by implementing bold, common sense policies that have been on the top of NETWORK's agenda for years. Now is the time to close the racial wealth gap and ensure all of us, not just the 1%, can thrive here in the United States.

Our elected officials have the opportunity pass comprehensive policies that will change the lives of working families everywhere by creating a pathway to citizenship and a universal paid family and medical leave program, closing the Medicaid coverage gap, extending the Child Tax Credit and Earned Income Tax Credits, and funding other priorities like affordable housing! Even better, Congress can do this by creating a more just tax code that rewards work, not wealth, by taxing corporations and the ultra-wealthy at more just levels. These tax reforms will pay for once-in-a-generation investments in communities of color and make our tax code embody our values of racial equity. While both chambers have been crafting this legislation for weeks, we still have work ahead. NETWORK will continue meeting with members of Congress and building grassroots pressure until a bold and just budget becomes the law of the land.



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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NETWORK members are so important to our mission!

Invite someone in your life to become a member.

As we celebrate our 50th Anniversary, we are initiating a Membership Drive. Help us answer the call to Gospel justice by introducing justice-seekers to our work.

Our Annual Membership Fee is \$50 (and above), or \$20–\$49 for seniors, students, or anyone living on a fixed income. Let your friends and family know that they can donate to NETWORK Lobby [501(c)(4)] or NETWORK Advocates [501(c)(3)], and either will entitle them to an annual membership and all its benefits including an annual subscription to *Connection* magazine.

As we honor our history of five decades of educating, organizing and lobbying for economic and social transformation, **we are excited about what we will be able to accomplish together over the next 50 years.**



Barbara Roseborough

*"We have visited the offices of our legislators, made phone calls, written letters-to-the-editor, participated with other local groups in support of social justice issues, and successfully used NETWORK's programs to reach out to the out local community. **It has been well worth my time and energy!**"*



Gene Lin

"I admire the way NETWORK applies traditional Catholic Social Justice theory to Congressional sausage-making. I joined NETWORK because in our democracy, I know Jesus asks me to do "more" than practice personal charity. "More" for me is joining NETWORK."

We are grateful for any additional contributions new members make throughout the membership year. These additional gifts, as well as their membership fees, help fulfill our mission. Become a member by:

- Making an annual investment of \$50 online at www.networklobby.org/becomeamember or by using the envelope inside.
- Joining the GEM (Give Every Month) Program by becoming a recurring donor.
- Joining the Bread and Roses Society through planned giving.

Celebrate NETWORK's 50th Anniversary by reaching out to your community of friends and family during our Membership Drive! Contact India-Grace Kellogg at 202-601-7866 or email ikellogg@networklobby.org with any questions.



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CELEBRATE NETWORK'S 50-YEAR MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

Honoring NETWORK's Past, Moving Boldly into the Future



"Politics, rightfully understood, is a ministry of justice, promoting the common good."

SISTER CATHERINE PINKERTON, CSJ, NETWORK LOBBYIST (1984-2010)

SAVE THE DATES

VIRTUAL KICK-OFF EVENT

Friday, December 17, 2021
8:00 PM Eastern/5:00 PM Pacific

50th ANNIVERSARY GALA

Spring 2022, Washington, D.C.
More information to come!

Visit: www.networklobby.org/50thAnniversary