



+Start of the 114th Congress +UN Conference in Lima
+ Response to police violence + Lutheran advocacy efforts across the country

Washington, D.C.

Stacy Martin, ELCA Advocacy Office

www.elca.org/advocacy



The 114th Congress

From the Keystone XL Pipeline to healthcare and banking regulations, the first few weeks of the 114th Congress will be packed with important votes. The ELCA Advocacy team in Washington, D.C., is working to build connections with new members of Congress and preparing for the upcoming legislative agenda on Capitol Hill. Be sure to follow our action alerts this year to stay up-to-date on these important issues!

Conclusion of UN Climate Change Conference in Lima, Peru

Mary Minette, ELCA Advocacy's director of environmental policy, returned from the U.N. Conference on Climate Change in Lima, Peru, last month. Going in to the conference, the U.N. hoped to create a global treaty to help limit global warming to 3.6 degrees F above pre-industrial times – a necessary limit which would prevent further disasters and high humanitarian costs. An official treaty will be decided in 2015 in Paris, but due to the involvement of various lobbies, the plans in Lima were far from reaching the 3.6-degree goal. Minette reports that the most challenging concern facing world leaders is how much developing countries will be expected to invest in cutting their emissions. Additional international funding will likely be needed for these countries.



Lutheran response to police violence issues

Last month, Lutherans helped take action on police violence by encouraging the Senate to pass the Death in Custody Reporting Act. The successfully passed act will require law enforcement agencies to report all deaths of people held in police custody to the Department of Justice, serving to improve transparency and local accountability.

ELCA Advocacy also supported Lutherans in the Justice for All March in D.C. on Dec. 13. The march, organized by the Rev. Al Sharpton, protested police violence against men of color. Our office organized dozens of Lutherans, including passionate lay people, young seminarians, and ELCA pastors from D.C. and New York. Lutheran attendees held a small vigil at [Luther Place Church](#) before joining the march on the Capitol.

Happy New Year from the ELCA Advocacy Office!



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California

Mark Carlson, Lutheran Office of Public Policy

www.loppca.org

Hunger Leadership Gathering: The Lutheran Office of Public Policy –California is looking forward to the ELCA Hunger Leadership Gathering Jan. 15-18 in the San Francisco Bay Area. Director Mark Carlson has been serving on the planning team and consulting on the Oakland congregation site visits (including, appropriately for the MLK Jr. weekend – a stop at [Remember-Them, Champions of Humanity](#), pictured right). It is the largest bronze sculpture in the West, featuring several African American civil rights leaders and other champions from around the world, such as Mother Theresa and Oscar Schindler). Mark also confirmed for the Gathering advocacy training a former legislator, Ted Lempert, who is president of [Children Now](#).



New legislative session: LOPP-CA arranged for the new president of the [Pacific School of Religion](#), David Vásquez-Levy, to read a Scripture passage at the Jan. 13 interfaith service at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament in Sacramento. Vásquez-Levy is an ELCA pastor and immigrant-rights advocate relocating from Luther College and will commemorate the beginning of a new legislative session. Archbishop Gomez of Los Angeles will give the message. Mark is working to arrange meetings for David with legislators and advocates, and lunch with local clergy.

LOPP-CA is co-sponsoring the Women's Policy Summit in Sacramento on Jan. 14, the Green California Summit and legislative reception on Jan. 22, and the California Women Lead reception for women legislators and statewide elected officials on Jan. 28, with co-hosts Assembly Speaker Toni Atkins and Minority Leader Kristen Olsen. LOPP-CA has confirmed state senator Hannah-Beth Jackson for the [ecumenical conference on climate change](#) Feb. 22-24 in Santa Barbara.

Colorado

Peter Severson, Lutheran Advocacy Ministry – Colorado

www.lam-co.org

Faith Advocacy Day 2015: The theme has been set for Lutheran Advocacy Ministry-Colorado's Faith Advocacy Day 2015. Our focus will be "Homelessness and Justice." Many dynamic speakers and presenters will be on hand to discuss what homelessness looks like in Colorado, how state government is involved in the issue, the role of affordable and permanent supportive housing, and how churches and people of faith can get involved in effective structural responses to the problem. The event will take place on Monday, Feb. 16, from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Bethany Lutheran Church, 4500 E. Hampden Ave. The cost is \$30 regular, \$20 student/low-income. You can pre-register by contacting Peter Severson (pseverson@rmselca.org) with your name, e-mail and congregation/ministry name. Registration will go live next week on LAM-CO's website. Join us and discover why faith and advocacy go hand-in-hand!

A new legislative session: The Colorado Legislature convened on Wednesday, Jan. 7. Lutheran Advocacy and many other groups were on hand for the opening-day ceremonies and the introduction of many of this session's bills.



Illinois

Jennifer DeLeon, Lutheran Advocacy – Illinois

www.lutheranadvocacy.org

Prisoner and Family Ministry: We ended the year with a road trip to Marion, Ill., to visit the Lutheran Social Services of Illinois Prisoner & Family Ministry program. The purpose of the trip was to strengthen the advocacy of our state office in partnership with LSSI and the ELCA's racial justice ministry. We are connecting the dots on how to make the recent [criminal justice social statement](#) a living document. We saw a firsthand account of the great work LSSI is doing with job training and life skills coaching of returning citizens. Our office shared with staff and program participants the state level advocacy we have been doing, and we created a process to involve them in becoming advocates on this issue. Judith Roberts shared with them the work of her office and the social statement. There are plans in the works to hold a series of workshops in 2015 for people to learn about the social statement, best practices in the field, and how to become advocates for criminal justice. You can learn more about the LSSI Prisoner & Family Ministry program [here](#).



Minnesota

Tammy Walhof, Lutheran Advocacy – Minnesota

tammy@lcppm.org

In December, LA-MN focused on the final touches to the legislative agenda, final decisions with LSS regarding a Bishop Breakfast and Advocacy Day for Pastors, as well as finalizing the FY2015 budget with the Policy Council. (The 2015 legislative session started on Jan. 6). LA-MN Director Tammy Walhof also spent time in November and December working on grants to bolster the budget. LA-MN will be the recipient of a \$5,000 grant and probably another for \$3,000-\$9,000.

Legislative issues:

- Affordable housing (\$39 million): Secure additional funding to expand a broad continuum of housing and homelessness services to help thousands have access to housing or maintain current housing.
- Homeless Youth Act (\$4 million increase): Secure additional funding to assist youth experiencing homelessness transition to successful adulthood.
- Clean energy and jobs:
 - 40 percent renewable energy by 2030 (to replace current renewable energy standard of 25 percent by 2025)
 - 2 percent energy efficiency savings (compared to 1.5 percent currently)
 - solar rural tax credits
- Reform of payday lending

Upcoming advocacy days: LA-MN has a full schedule heading into 2015. Feb. 2 will be Clean Energy and Good Jobs Day at the Capitol, and on Feb. 19 LA-MN and LSS will co-host a bishop/legislator breakfast as well as an Advocacy Day for Pastors. March 10 will be a Day on the Hill with Interfaith Partners (Joint Religious Legislative Coalition).



New Jersey

Sara Lilja, New Jersey

logm@njsynod.org

Earned sick days: We are currently in the midst of working toward passage of the state-wide earned sick days bill in the Assembly. The bill has passed the Assembly Labor and Budget committees and is awaiting a full floor vote. A2354 is a model earned-sick-days law that covers nearly all 1.2 million workers in the state who lack earned sick days. The majority of those who will benefit are low-wage workers earning less than \$10 an hour.

The bill allows workers to use earned sick days to care for themselves as well as all immediate family members when sick and to use earned sick days to deal with, relocate or find safe accommodations due to circumstances resulting from being a victim of domestic or sexual violence. It includes the best components of earned-sick-days laws adopted around the nation, including the states of Connecticut, Massachusetts, and California, as well as the cities of San Francisco; San Diego; Portland, Ore.; Eugene, Ore.; Seattle; Washington, D.C.; New York City; and eight cities in New Jersey.

Food insecurity in New Jersey: LOGM participated in a press conference with leading legislators and faith leaders from around the state. Check out an article on the conference [here](#).

New Mexico

Ruth Hoffman, Lutheran Advocacy Ministry – New Mexico

lutheranadvocacynm.org

Bishop Jim Gonia and LAM-NM Director Ruth Hoffman attended the New Mexico Conference of Churches annual judicatory leaders retreat in Albuquerque the first week of December. This is a gathering of the leaders of the New Mexico Conference of Churches member denominations, including Bishop Michael Vono of the Episcopal Diocese of the Rio Grande and Archbishop Michael Sheehan of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Santa Fe. The leaders agreed to send a letter to President Obama and the New Mexico congressional delegation urging that the women and children at the soon-to-be-closed Artesia detention facility be released and not transferred to another detention facility.



Pennsylvania

Amy Reumann, Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania

www.lutheranadvocacypa.org

The Pennsylvania General Assembly began a new session with swearing-in for lawmakers and new leadership in both Republican-controlled chambers on Jan. 6. Democratic Governor-elect Tom Wolf will be sworn in on Jan. 20. LAMPa has also worked with the statewide partners to prepare a policy paper, "[Meeting Pennsylvania's Hunger Challenge](#)" for the Wolf transition team and is also preparing a policy paper on trauma-informed education.



Lower Susquehanna Synod's Winterfest retreat: [LAMPa staff](#) led an interactive presentation to 430 high school youth and leaders on the theme "Hungry." The presentation invited attendees to look at the connections between poverty, education, housing and hunger. Youth were engaged in a social media, postcard and electronic letter [advocacy campaign](#) for the state housing trust fund. With the help of the synod hunger team, they built raised garden beds and Garden Soxx to be donated to community and school gardens in neighborhoods experiencing food insecurity. A non-

Lutheran representative from the county's health care community who attended the event declared, "THIS is what the church is supposed to look like!"



Poverty and trauma-informed education: In December, LAMPa also recruited and accompanied three Lutheran school leaders as they made brief remarks in support of trauma-informed education to a Basic Education Funding Commission hearing. LAMPa will collaborate with Glade Run Lutheran Services about intersection of their work and the new LAMPa issue agenda, and state-wide training in the Open Table accompaniment program.

Congregations: On Jan. 11, LAMPa will lead an adult forum on immigration at Trinity in New Holland and an advocacy presentation at Holy Trinity in Irwin, Va.

Virginia

Marco Grimaldo, Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy www.virginiainterfaithcenter.org

State budget: Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy offered testimony before the House and Senate Appropriations and Finance committees during hearings held in five Virginia communities. Through our members and with our partners we emphasized the priority on strengthening families, creating opportunity and overcoming inequality. We specifically called on these budget decision-makers to expand Medicaid to reach more low-income Virginians and to make Virginia's Earned Income Credit at least partially refundable.

Hunger: We have been meeting with a task force that Bishop Mauney has convened to address childhood hunger throughout the Virginia Synod, and in that context we have joined with Lutheran Family Services to meet with members of the governor's staff about their interest in addressing hunger in Virginia. We facilitated a meeting with Bishop Mauney and First Lady Dorothy McAulife, who chairs the Governor's Commission on Bridging the Nutritional Divide. Bishop Mauney now serves on that commission.

Immigration: We are ramping up our work with immigrant communities to help coordinate enrollment in the president's new deferred-action program for immigrants. We hope to work with both synods in Virginia and have begun a conversation with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service to help as well.

Finally, our Day for All People advocacy day at the Capitol will be Jan. 20 in Richmond; we are looking forward to a stronger than ever turnout that day!

Washington

Paul Benz, Faith Action Network

www.fanwa.org

Scroll Project: Faith Action Network (FAN) is working on its "Scroll Project" as a public statement for the need for revenue in our state budget to protect the most vulnerable and our environment, funding for education, as well as funding for a 21st century transportation system. The genesis for this came from the December meeting of FAN's Interfaith Leaders Council. A small group of religious leaders will unveil the scroll on the first day of session on the steps of the Capitol (Jan. 12). After the press conference, replicas of the scroll will be distributed to each office of our state Legislature (147 legislators).



ELCA engagement: In January, FAN will join the January Bishop's Convocation. Additionally, an ELCA parish will be hosting the Spokane Legislative Conference. An article on the state's budget, hunger and nutrition issues for this session will be in all three synod newsletters.



FAN's four hunger and nutrition legislative Issues:

- Farmer's Market Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, Children and Seniors
- Emergency Food Assistance Program (funding for state food banks)
- State Food Assistance (funding for legal immigrant households living in poverty)
- Breakfast After the Bell (funding to help implement breakfast for all school districts)

For more background information on these issues, see our [Faith Action Network's Legislative Agenda Fact Sheets](#), [Anti-hunger and Nutrition Coalition](#), and [Washington Food Coalition](#).

Wisconsin

Cindy Crane, Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin

www.lopep.org

The new Wisconsin legislative session began on Jan. 5. LOPPW will be working on a number of issues this year, including:

Safety net for people in poverty: LOPPW will address likely to be proposed barriers to be placed before FoodShare recipients and will support efforts to have Wisconsin receive federal dollars for BadgerCare.

Prison reform for youth: LOPPW's director will be a main speaker and organizer of writing letters to legislators at an Epiphany celebration hosted by Redeemer Lutheran Church in Stevens Point. Advisory Council member the Rev. Annie Edison-Albright is organizing the event. We'll address priorities of LOPPW with a focus on supporting a bill to have 17-year-old offenders of non-violent crimes be tried as juveniles.

Sex trafficking: LOPPW has launched a Safe Harbor Campaign to support trafficked youth. Advisory Council member the Rev. Diane House and Director Amy Hartman of Cherish All Children are taking major leadership with support of our task force organizing a three-hour conference in Menomonie in February. LOPPW's director is taking the main leadership organizing a Safe Harbor Campaign rally in Madison in March. Assemblywoman Jill Billings has drafted a Safe Harbor bill and has included LOPPW's director for requesting input before she presents it.



Other advocacy: LOPPW's director continues to work with other faith groups to organize an Advocacy Day in April. The director will lead a workshop on Poverty, Homelessness, and Trafficking (with a focus on youth) at Grace Lutheran Church in Wisconsin Rapids in January. Please click [here](#) for more about upcoming events.