



+Syrian Refugees +Climate Change +International Health
+ State Action across the country

ELCA Advocacy Office, Washington, D.C.

Mary Minette, Interim Director

www.elca.org/advocacy

SYRIAN REFUGEES: In light of the tragic attacks in Paris, ELCA Advocacy joined with our U.S. partner, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS), to take action on supporting and protecting Syrian refugees forced to flee violence in their communities. On November 18, the Rev. Elizabeth Eaton, Presiding Bishop of the ELCA [called for support of refugee resettlement saying](#), “We are not naive about possible new threats of terrorism, but denying refuge to thousands of desperate people is not who we are as Christians, nor will it guarantee our security. Multiple [ELCA bishops from across the country](#) voiced their thoughts on resettlement as well. The United States is a welcoming country with a religiously diverse society, and our refugee resettlement program should continue to reflect this.” Learn more and find out how you can take action at www.LIRS.org.

COP21 PARIS: Throughout this month, 150 heads of state are gathering in Paris [to negotiate an international agreement that addresses the global issue of climate change](#). President Obama gave remarks at the first session of the United Nations Conference on Climate Change (#COP21), stating that, “the growing threat of climate change could define the contours of this century more dramatically than any other.” ELCA Advocacy Interim-Director, Mary Minette, arrived in Paris earlier this weekend to participate in the summit on behalf of ACT Alliance. Mary will be joined by a number of partners from ACT Alliance, World Council of Churches, Lutheran World Federation, as well as ecumenical partner church leaders. Make sure to visit [our ELCA Advocacy blog](#) to keep up to date on what she is up to!

MINNEAPOLIS DEMONSTRATIONS: Last month, Lutheran leaders in Minneapolis were joined in demonstrations where five people were shot outside the city’s 4th Precinct station. The demonstrations were aimed at urging accountability in the justice system in response to the death of Jamar Clark, a 25-year-old black man who was shot by a police officer earlier this month. Marches, prayer vigils and rallies began Nov. 15. In addition to those keeping vigil, many helped deliver blankets, hot food, and give words of encouragement. [Read the full story on the ELCA Advocacy Blog](#).

INTERNATIONAL HEALTH: As we prepare for the season of Christmas, ELCA Advocacy is supporting the Reach Every Mother and Child Act, an initiative in Congress that would improve strategies and access to healthcare for mothers and young children across the world. Lutheran social ministry organizations both here at home and abroad continue to provide health services—including child and maternal health, to those in need of it. You can share this message and offer your support at the [ELCA Action Center](#)!

MONEY IN POLITICS: In the coming weeks, Congress will vote on a \$1.15 trillion omnibus spending package that will likely include a campaign-finance policy rider. The proposed rider threatens to do away with spending limits set for political party expenditures in elections. This proposal in Congress comes in the wake of several narrow Supreme Court rulings, including Citizens United v. FEC, which greatly increased the role that money plays in our political process. Check out the [ELCA Action Center](#) and the



[Advocacy Fact Sheet on Money in Politics](#) to find out how you can get involved and prevent more money from distorting our politics.

ADVENT BLOG SERIES: During this season of Advent, ELCA Policy Directors are sharing their personal reflections on what this time of the year means. Start your advent season [by reading our blog for the first week of advent](#), and [subscribe to our network](#) to follow more reflections this month!

Lutheran Office for World Community, United Nations, New York, N.Y.

Dennis Frado, Director

PRESENTATION ON CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE SDG'S: On November 5, 2015 Daniel Lenski (LOWC) together with Lynnaia Main (The Episcopal Church) gave a presentation on the participation of civil society in the development of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) at a student seminar, organized by United Methodist Women. The students were from American University in Washington D.C., and had a particular interest in the role of faith-based organizations within the United Nations system. Daniel also discussed the role of the LWF and ELCA in the implementation of the Global Goals.



DAVID WUNSCH VISITS LOWC: On November 20, 2015, David Wunsch, Director of Unit Operations and Programs, Global Mission visited LOWC. He attended the International Peace Institute (IPI) discussion on leadership and global partnerships in the face of today's refugee crisis, which featured a conversation with H.E. António Guterres, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and H.E. Ms. Annika Söder, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Sweden. David also attended a plenary session of the General Assembly on "Global awareness of the tragedies of irregular migrants in the Mediterranean basin with specific emphasis on Syrian asylum seekers".

FAREWELL TO DANIEL LENSKI: After completing a one year internship with LOWC, we bid farewell to Daniel Lenski. He came from the Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau/EKHN, Germany. Daniel followed several issues at the UN including those related to Gender Justice, Reform of the Security Council, Freedom of Religion and Belief, the Post-2015 process, and other thematic discussions, such as the process of debt restructuring and the situation of migrants, among others. LOWC is grateful to Daniel for his service and to EKHN for supporting him.



California

Mark Carlson, Lutheran Office of Public Policy

www.loppca.org



As California grieves the San Bernardino massacre, [Solaris](#) musicians who sang in the Capitol Rotunda the day before continue their [California appearances](#), comforting and gently challenging audiences with sounds of care, peace, community, joy, and gratitude. LOPP-CA director Mark Carlson heard them at the Parliament of World Religions, remarked how good they would sound in the Rotunda, one thing led to another, and they were the first group in a daily holiday concert series that runs through Dec. 23. Prior to a concert in the St. John's Lutheran sanctuary, they lifted the spirits of over 100 homeless men and women camping overnight in St. John's social hall, part of the intermittent Safeground hospitality at a few Midtown churches. At dinner with Mark, they had brought up the "gun culture" they had experienced in NM and AZ, where they had just been, an experience that clashed with their Canadian roots.

As California prepared to send a strong delegation of public officials and advocates to Paris, a November highlight was the [California Interfaith Power & Light](#) Cool Climate Awards service at the Catholic Cathedral of Christ the Light in Oakland. Lutheran Church of the Incarnation in Davis received the top award in the energy efficiency category. Their choir sang *For the Beauty of the Earth*, among an eclectic mix of musicians and choirs. As a CIPL steering committee member, Mark Carlson encouraged LCI to self-nominate. He also presented the water stewardship award to a Catholic girls middle school in Los Angeles County.

Colorado

Peter Severson, Lutheran Advocacy Ministry – Colorado

www.lam-co.org

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA FOR 2016: The Policy Committee of Lutheran Advocacy Ministry-Colorado met in early November to discuss the ministry's 2016 legislative agenda. Items adopted included:

- A continuing commitment to anti-hunger work through the programs that were federally reauthorized this summer under the banner of child nutrition
- Support for poverty reduction measures like raising the minimum wage and supporting robust investment in social and human services programs
- Improving access to healthcare through effective implementation of Connect for Health Colorado and expanding Medicaid enrollment among especially vulnerable populations
- Calling for racial justice in the processes and structures of contemporary society and encouraging congregations to be a prophetic witness to that call
- Working to incentivize the construction of more low-income housing by renewing the state Low-Income Housing Tax Credit

LOW-INCOME HOUSING: LAM-CO director Peter Severson spoke at the Colorado Social Legislation Committee's Fall Forum in November, addressing faith community responses to the housing crisis in Colorado, particularly in urban areas. The forum was titled, "Can We Afford to Live in Metro Denver Anymore?"



LOOKING AHEAD: The Colorado General Assembly will convene for their annual 120-day session on January 13, 2016.

Illinois

Jennifer DeLeon, Lutheran Advocacy – Illinois

www.lutheranadvocacy.org

Although we are not hearing stories in the news about the unaccompanied migrant children we know they are here and need our help. That is why we are collaborating with Mary Campbell, ELCA Manager for Relationships in Latin America and the Caribbean, ELCA Global Mission as part of an outreach network to the three synods for educating, recruiting, and involving congregations in the AMPARO (Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation, & Opportunity) strategy. LA-I will offer workshops to educate, recruit, and train individuals and congregations to participate in three concrete areas: volunteer for the Guardian Angels program (immigration court visitation) to become a welcoming congregation and recruit advocates for immigration issues identified by the Washington office in partnership with Alaide Vilchis Ibarra Assistant Director, Migration Policy and Advocacy.



In November we met with the Metro Chicago synod to begin the planning process of rolling this campaign out to the synod and we went with Mary Campbell to the Chicago Immigration court where many of the children have to make the trip to Chicago from Indiana and Wisconsin. Some have legal representation others do not and need our help. As part of the guardian angles program you can help guide these families in obtaining the resources they need for their next court date. If you live in Illinois please consider becoming a volunteer for the Guardian Angels program. For more information contact Jennifer DeLeon@lssi.org or Mary.Campbell@elca.org.

For a more in-depth look at the migrant children issue: [Our Communities in Crisis Central America Report](#).

Minnesota

Tammy Walhof, Lutheran Advocacy – Minnesota

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November was a month filled with many Coalition meetings collaborative plans.

PAYDAY LENDING: Work continues on a joint summit to build a broader understanding of payday lending. The event, scheduled for January 28, will include basic background on payday lending, faith perspectives on lending and usury, tips for countering payday lending industry arguments, prophetic messaging and preaching, and healthy alternatives.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING/HOMELESSNESS: After listening to weekly proposals, the Homes for All Policy Team moved into decision-making for the 2016 session. Previously, the coalition decided to support bonding for supportive housing development/rehab, existing housing preservation, homeownership support (land trusts), and public housing rehab (energy upgrades/conservation). In December, we'll decide what else to support from 14+ programs and policy proposals.



CLEAN ENERGY/CLIMATE: LA-MN participated in a 3-year proposal for Clean Energy & Climate Cluster work under Minnesota Environmental Partnership, including expansion of grassroots education & action. Lutheran Advocacy-MN has also been part of a multi-organization effort pulling together a Clean Energy State Table, beyond but interrelated to the MEP Cluster effort.

IMMIGRATION: As anti-immigrant/refugee fervor increases, LA-MN has been consulting colleague groups to find appropriate messaging to counter fear and misinformation. Given rhetoric, LA-MN's work will primarily focus on changing the tone to create a welcoming environment.

NOVEMBER EVENTS & PRESENTATIONS: Tammy Walhof (Director) presented LA-MN and effective advocacy to church forums, interns from a partner, and the Southwestern Minnesota Synod Council.

LA-MN helped sponsor a couple climate education events, and Tammy continued "clean energy/climate conversations."

[Facebook](#) Twitter: [@LuthAdvocacyMN](#)

New Mexico

Ruth Hoffman, Lutheran Advocacy Ministry – New Mexico

lutheranadvocacynm.org



Opening session

The 2015 Lutheran Advocacy Ministry-NM annual Advocacy Conference took place on Saturday, November 7 at St. Timothy Lutheran Church in Albuquerque. Approximately 75 advocates were in attendance, including ELCA Lutherans from around the state and many of our ecumenical partners. Breakout session topics were hunger in New Mexico, predatory lending, solitary confinement and the 2016 LAM-NM Advocacy Agenda.



Pastors Anne Morawski, Rachael Powell and Pat Holman



Sen. Ortiz y Pino

During lunch, State Senator Jerry Ortiz y Pino spoke about how his Roman Catholic faith informs his legislative work and about the upcoming legislative session.

Ohio

Nick Bates, The Faith Coalition for the Common Good

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The Southern Ohio Synod Advocacy Taskforce partnered with Synod hunger leaders hosting "The World's Largest Potluck" for an advocacy day on November 18th. Joined by partners with Lutheran Social Services and Mid-Ohio Foodbank, advocates spoke with multiple legislative offices on the important role that public policy plays in ending hunger in our communities.





The day was grounded in the image of a potluck – where everyone contributes a little so that everyone can have a lot. Advocates explained to legislators and staff that we can end hunger in Ohio with small changes to public policies in Ohio, we could dramatically reduce hunger. Specifics regarding state imposed barriers to SNAP benefits were discussed. The group also spoke about the importance of improving Ohio's Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to help more hard working families struggling to get by.

The advocates encouraged the community at a press conference and the legislative offices that everyone needs to remember that hunger is year round, and not just during the holidays. "We are grateful to all of the generosity that pours out at this time of year, but we pray and challenge our state leaders to prioritize ending hunger in 2016," Bishop Suzanne Dillahunt says. "Through public leadership, and our partnership, we can eradicate hunger in Ohio."

For further information please contact Nick Bates, Southern Ohio Synod Advocacy Ministries
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Pennsylvania

Amy Reumann, Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania www.lutheranadvocacypa.org
Tracey DePasquale, Associate Director

Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania's Policy Council and seven bishops met the first week of December to adopt a 2016 agenda and express profound gratitude to the Rev. Amy Reumann as she



departs to head ELCA Advocacy in Washington, DC. Amy led Lutheran advocacy in Pennsylvania for more than six years by equipping disciples to speak from their faith as well as bearing bold personal witness to the Gospel in the public square. She will be deeply missed, but Pennsylvania is heartened and happy for the gifts she brings to the wider Church. Associate Director Tracey DePasquale will serve as interim director.

LAMPa celebrated the passage of a bill to expand the state [Housing Trust Fund](#), which will improve access to safe, affordable housing and eliminate blight.

The [payday lending industry](#) has made its now annual appearance in the chaos of the close of a budget process. Staff visited lawmakers and continue to work with the broad statewide coalition in opposition to this new attack on the state's excellent consumer protection laws.

Tracey attended the second meeting of the new [State Food Security Partnership](#), offering perspectives of the experience of the ELCA World Hunger network. LAMPa also reached out to our congregational hunger ministries to sign on to a letter to the governor seeking additional funding for hunger in his next budget proposal. Amy preached and taught an adult forum at Trinity in Reading and participated in an interfaith prayer service and march on Climate Change at the state capitol.



Virginia

Charles Swadley, Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy www.virginiainterfaithcenter.org

Neill Caldwell, Communications Director

The Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy will hold its Annual Meeting Dec. 8 at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Richmond. The speaker will be Michael Cassidy, CEO of the Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis. The Center will recognize State Sen. John Watkins as the Legislator of the Year, and the Virginia Poverty Law Center for its work in healthcare, predatory lending and fighting hunger.

On Nov. 18, the Center hosted a summit on childhood hunger, bringing together more than 50 religious leaders from multiple faiths across the Commonwealth. Discussion centered around an agreement toward common advocacy for legislation to support universal breakfast in the classroom. And coming up on Jan. 20, 2016, VICPP will hold its annual Day for All People, at the Virginia Union University in Richmond.

Mental health problems are particularly visible in the U.S. prison system, with a population more than two million, 400,000 of whom have a mental health diagnosis, reports Karen Cameron of Virginia Consumer Voices. Among Virginia's incarcerated population, 1 in 4 have had a mental health diagnosis. Virginia has had some unfortunate experience with this issue, with the deaths of Jamycheal Mitchell in the Hampton Roads Regional Jail as he waited for a bed to open up in the over-crowded Virginia state hospital system, and Natasha McKenna in the Fairfax County Jail. Both had been diagnosed with schizophrenia, but neither had access to mental health care while incarcerated.

Washington

Paul Benz, Faith Action Network

www.fanwa.org



FAN advocates gathered last year during IFAD for workshops on our legislative agenda items, and how to be a great advocate in the halls of power.

The state legislative 'committee days' were held in the capital before the week of Thanksgiving in preparation for the 2016 sixty-day session, which begins on Monday, January 11. Faith Action Network (FAN) was there for meetings with legislators, coalition partners, and to prepare for our Interfaith Advocacy Day on February 4. To view our 2016 legislative agenda [click here](#). Our key issue remains reducing wealth inequality. FAN will be supportive of a 2016 ballot initiative effort to increase our state's minimum wage and fund our sick leave policy. Other priorities will be criminal justice reforms such as post-secondary education in our prisons, legal financial obligation reforms (debtor prison), and repealing our death penalty statute. Passage of a state voting rights act will also remain a key priority for FAN.

FAN is also in the midst of planning our second major event of the year – Interfaith Advocacy Day in Olympia on Thursday, February 4. We also participate in and co-sponsor the Spokane Legislative Conference on Saturday, January 30 and we are the sponsor and convener of our Yakima Advocacy Conference in central Washington on Saturday, February 6.



FAN's signature event of the year, our Annual Dinner, was held on Sunday, November 15 with the theme of "Yes We Can!" Over 400 advocates from more than 67 faith communities, community and labor partners, and elected officials and their representatives attended. Our featured speaker was the senior pastor of First African Methodist Episcopal Church in Seattle: Rev. Dr. Carey Anderson, who addressed the racial injustices that are facing our communities and nation.



Pr. Anderson spoke to over 400 people at our Annual Dinner.

Wisconsin

Cindy Crane, Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin

www.loppw.org

LOPPW is thankful for advocates who raised their voices in the midst of some troubling legislation that passed in Wisconsin this year. We have faith those voices will endure and multiply.

WORKSHOPS AND CONFERENCES: LOPPW led a workshop on children in poverty at Peace Lutheran Church in Waunakee. The director participated in a World Hunger event in Iowa, where she made contact with hunger leaders from the LaCrosse Area, Northwest, East Central, Greater Milwaukee, and South-Central synods.



*Region 5 ELCA World
Hunger event in Dubuque*

CARE FOR GOD'S CREATION: LOPPW's director worked with a volunteer to prepare for the first Care for God's Creation team in the South-Central Synod. The director and an LOPPW intern attended an all-day meeting with several faith-based and secular partners to discuss creating a statewide table to combine resources to advocate for cleaner air and address other

environmental concerns in Wisconsin.

ANTI-TRAFFICKING: LOPPW/Cherish All Children's team has decided on three locations in three synods for conferences and have created planning teams for each event. We are thankful for help from a WELCA grant. LOPPW submitted the grant proposal in the spring of this year. The director has met regularly with one of LOPPW's interns to help give shape to a resource on trafficking that our intern is developing.



*Confirmands taking the LOPPW quiz
at Confirmation Extravaganza in
the South-Central Synod.*

SYRIAN REFUGEES: LOPPW added educational and worship resources to the LOPPW website in response to e-mail exchanges between state public policy office and D.C. staffs.