

# FRIENDS COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL LEGISLATION

A presentation to AQ Meeting 10/7/18  
By Walter Singer

FC NL is a Quaker lobbying organization that has offices one block from Capitol Hill.



They have a staff of 60 with 20 registered lobbyists and their legislative policy is based on the following.

*We seek a world  
free of war and the threat of war.  
We seek a society  
with equity and justice for all.  
We seek a community  
where every person's potential may be fulfilled.  
We seek an earth restored.*

In this presentation we will learn about FCNL and the activities of the Abington Advocacy Team, one of many local groups of concerned citizens supported by the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) We are also supported by Abington Meeting. FCNL has been a Quaker lobbying organization in Washington DC for over 70 years and has a staff of about 45 people.



SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS  
Friends Committee on National Legislation *A Quaker Lobby in the Public Interest*

Many people today are concerned about the actions and policies of our federal government and ask “what is the most effective thing I could do to affect change” The Friends Committee on National Legislation FCNL has been asking that question for 75 years and has found that direct contact with our elected representatives is the answer.

## Legislative Priorities for the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress

*Approved by FCNL's General Committee on November 13, 2016*

The Friends Committee on National Legislation seeks to bring spiritual values and Friends' testimonies to bear on public policy decisions. FCNL solicited the views and concerns of Quaker meetings, churches, and organizations around the country to help discern the following priorities for our lobbying and public education work during the 115th Congress (2017-2018):

- Promote peacebuilding, diplomacy, and the peaceful prevention and resolution of violent conflict with an emphasis on the Middle East.
- Reduce military spending and armed interventions.
- Promote nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.
- Advance equitable criminal justice systems that eliminate mass incarceration and support law-enforcement that is community-oriented and demilitarized.
- Pursue policies that promote and respect the rights, safety, and dignity of all immigrants, refugees and migrants.
- Promote equitable access for all citizens to participation in the political process.
- Promote policies that reduce economic inequality and poverty, encourage fair compensation for workers and health care for all.
- Work to end gun violence.
- Witness and advocate on Native American concerns.
- Advocate for sustainable solutions to climate disruption and its consequences.

In each priority FCNL and Friends are called on to identify, expose, and work to eliminate institutional racism in order to promote genuine equality of opportunity and communities in which everyone can safely live, learn, work, worship, and love.

FCNL seeks to collaborate across the political spectrum to advance these priorities. FCNL's work will be based on legislative opportunities, specific expertise, leadings, and available resources. In addition, *The World We Seek* (FCNL's Policy Statement) gives FCNL the flexibility to respond to crises and to other important legislative opportunities, as Way opens.

***Of all the enemies to public liberty, war is, perhaps, the most to be dreaded, because it comprises and develops the germ of every other. War is the parent of armies; from these proceed debts and taxes; and armies, and debts, and taxes are the known instruments for bringing the many under the domination of a few....No nation could reserve its freedom in the midst of continual warfare.***

*James Madison, in "Political Observations" 1795*

The Abington Advocacy Team is one of over 90 teams and over 1,500 people across the country supported by FCNL lobbying our members of Congress. Currently, the issue we're focusing on is **Preventing Nuclear War With North Korea**

**"How did we get to the point where we accept that war is something perpetual and routine?!"**

**The militarized approach to preventing extremism and war is an illusion of security. It isn't working, and it can't work in the future. We cannot achieve a society of peace through a society of violence or strongarm tactics.**

**We should audit the Pentagon (which has never been done even though required by law), and emphasize shared security rather than unilateral security.**

(An internal Defence Department study conducted by the McKinsey consulting company)...collected data that exposed how the military services themselves were spending princely sums to hire hordes of defense contractors.

For example, the Army employed 199,661 full-time contractors, according to a confidential McKinsey report obtained by The Post. That alone exceeded the combined civil workforce for the Departments of State, Agriculture, Commerce, Education, Energy, and Housing and Urban Development.

The average cost to the Army for each contractor that year: \$189,188, including salary, benefits and other expenses. 37.73 billion

The Navy was not much better. It had 197,093 contractors on its payroll. On average, each cost \$170,865.

In comparison, the Air Force had 122,470 contractors. Each cost, on average, \$186,142.

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**Wealth is attended with power, by which bargains and proceedings contrary to** universal righteousness are supported; and here oppression, carried on with worldly policy and order, clothes itself with the name of justice and becomes like a seed of discord in the soil. And as this spirit which wanders from the pure habitation prevails, so the seeds of war swell and sprout and grow and become strong until much fruit is ripened. Thus cometh the harvest.... Spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, which is "a heap in the day of grief, and of desparate sorrow." O that we who declare against wars, and acknowledge our trust to be in God only, may walk in the Light and therein examine our... motives in holding great estates! May we look upon our treasures... and try whether the seeds of war have any nourishment in these our possessions.

John Woolman, c. 1764

**Be faithful in maintaining our testimony against all war as contrary to the spirit and teaching of Christ. Every human being is a child of God with a measure of God's Light. War and other instruments of violence and oppression ignore this reality and violate our relation with God. Keep primary our Friends' concern for the elimination of combat in the outward world as in our personal lives. Friends are advised to live in the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of all wars. Friends are further advised to aid in all ways possible the development of international order and understanding.**

*Dear Friends, keep all your meetings in the authority, wisdom and power of Truth and the unity of the blessed Spirit. Let your conduct and conversation be such as become the Gospel of Christ. Exercise yourselves to have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward all people. Be steadfast and faithful in your allegiance and service to your Lord, and the God of peace be with you.*

**Elders of Balby, Yorkshire, 1656**

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