

Lutheran Day on the Hill Congregational Letter Writing Campaign

Imagine the impact of hundreds of Lutherans calling for social justice and equality at one place and one time. That's what we hope to achieve with this special letter writing campaign.

Join Lutheran Services in Iowa and the ECLA in this special effort to hand-deliver hundreds of letters to our legislators during Lutheran Day on the Hill. It's a powerful way for your congregation to become educated and get involved in important issues facing Iowa today.

Plan a Letter Writing Opportunity for Your Congregation

You can invite your congregation to submit letters individually, or you could devote a half hour during fellowship time or another event to write letters as a group. This could also be a youth group or Sunday school activity. All are invited to participate, regardless of whether you are able to attend Lutheran Day on the Hill!

How to Submit Your Letters

- 1) Please make two copies of each letter. We will deliver copies to individual legislators, as well as a large stack of letters to the leaders of the Iowa House and Senate.
- 2) Mail letters to: LSI, Attn: LDH 2016, 3116 University Avenue, Des Moines, IA 50311. Alternately, you can also scan and email them to LSIowa@LSIowa.org. Make sure your letters arrive by Feb. 15, so we can process them before the event.
- 3) If you plan to attend Lutheran Day on the Hill, you can bring your copies in person. We'll have a drop box available at the event!

Letter Writing Tips

Choose one of the five advocacy issues from Lutheran Day on the Hill, or choose another issue important to you. The five issues for Lutheran Day on the Hill include refugee services, water quality, human trafficking, the Family Investment Program (FIP) grant and racial disparity in the criminal justice system. Detailed issue sheets are available in this packet.

Use these tips when writing your letter:

- 1) Keep your letter brief and no longer than one page.
- 2) In the first paragraph, tell your legislator that you are a constituent and identify the issue about which you are writing.
- 3) Choose three points that you feel will be most persuasive to your legislator.

- 4) Tell your legislator why this issue or legislation matters to his or her community. Include a personal story if you have one about how it affects you or your community.
- 5) You are the expert. Your legislator may know no more about a given issue than you do. Be courteous, but firmly make your points.
- 6) Close with a thank you for your legislator's time and consideration.

YOUR NAME
YOUR ADDRESS
YOUR CITY, STATE, ZIP

Dear STATE REPRESENTATIVE or STATE SENATOR,

My name is YOUR NAME, and I am one of your constituents in YOUR CITY.

I am writing today as a friend of Lutheran Services in Iowa and a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to ask for your support for ISSUE HERE.

This is important to my family and me because REASONS HERE (please refer to information on the next page or from LSIowa.org/advocacy for issue points).

We can do better.

As a person of faith, I am deeply concerned about ensuring Iowa remains a state that values social justice, equality and our environment. I ask you to ACTION HERE.

Your support on this issue is extremely important to me. Please let me know where you stand.

Thank you for your consideration and service.

Sincerely,

YOUR NAME
YOUR CITY

FEBRUARY 17TH, 2016

LUTHERAN DAY ON THE HILL

BRIEF ISSUES OVERVIEW



Refugee Resettlement and Security Clearances

We urge legislators to do everything they can to maintain Iowa's status as a leader in welcoming international refugees:

- All refugees receive extensive screening, and the current concern over refugees from Syria and Iraq, as well as Muslims in general, is unwarranted. To halt refugee resettlement would mean tens of thousands of innocent people will face great peril and almost certain death.
- As stated by the three Bishops of the ELCA's Iowa synods in an open letter to Gov. Branstad, our Christian faith compels us to welcome the stranger and those in need.

Concern for Water Quality in Iowa

We urge legislators to support initiatives aimed at preserving the quality of Iowa drinking water.

- *As Christians, we believe God calls us to care for Creation: "This church will support proposals and actions to protect and restore, in the United States and the Caribbean, the quality of . . . water, especially drinking water, groundwater, polluted runoff, and industrial and municipal waste . . ."* - ELCA Social Statement, **Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice**, 1993
- We take no side on the legal dispute between Des Moines Water Works and Iowa counties, but we do support responsible efforts to address the issue of water quality.

Human Trafficking

We urge legislators to continue making proactive progress in areas of human trafficking, such as the changes made to the Iowa Code over the last three sessions that allow authorities to more effectively prosecute human traffickers.

- Michael Ferjak, senior criminal investigator with the Iowa Department of Justice, reports that updates to the law have made it easier to prosecute cases of human trafficking. However, more needed changes may come to light as more cases are prosecuted.

- Since 2007, the National Human Trafficking Resource Center has received 494 calls regarding human trafficking in Iowa, with 108 cases reported.
- The major highways running across Iowa make it prime territory for those seeking to enslave children and young adults and force them into prostitution.
- *“Sexual exploitation in any situation, either personally or commercially, inside or outside of marriage, is sinful because it is destructive of God’s good gift [of sexuality] and human integrity.”* - ELCA Social Statement, **Commercial Sexual Exploitation.**

FIP (Family Investment Program) Increase

We urge legislators to support an increase in the FIP grant, the basic monthly cash grant to Iowa’s lowest income citizens.

- This is a basic humanitarian issue. This grant has not been increased in decades, while the cost of living has increased substantially.
- Iowa’s FIP grants to recipients have not been adjusted since FY 1989, 27 fiscal years ago! Since that time, the maximum basic grant for a family of four has stagnated at \$495 per month. In the same period, the Consumer Price Index has increased by more than 137%.

Racism in the Criminal Justice System

We urge legislators to support emerging efforts to address racism and disproportionality in the Iowa criminal justice system.

- *“Four other imperatives also require vigorous action from policy makers: the criminal justice system must acknowledge the disparities, and address the implicit and explicit racism that persists within; it must recognize the special needs of juvenile offenders; it must stop the privatization of prison facilities; and finally, it must foster the full reintegration of ex-offenders into community”.* - ELCA Social Statement, **The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries**, 2013.



For more information or if you have questions, please contact:

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INCREASE FAMILY INVESTMENT PROGRAM (FIP) BASIC GRANTS

Iowa Human Needs Advocates supports an increase in Family Investment Program grants.



Discussion

Iowa's basic Family Investment Program (FIP) grants to recipients have not been adjusted since FY **1989**, 27 fiscal years now! Since that time, the maximum basic grant for a family of 4, for example, has stagnated at \$495 per month. Over that 27 years, the Consumer Price Index has increased by more than 137%.

In the same time period, the Federal Poverty Guideline for a family of 4 has been adjusted from \$12,100 annually to \$24,250 annually, or an 104.1% increase. In the year 2015, that Federal Poverty Guideline translated to \$2021 per month in needed income, for that family of 4.

That Iowa basic grant, adjusted by 104.1%, would be \$1010 per month, an annual income of \$12,245, or still only 50.5% of the Federal Poverty Guideline.

In FY 2002, the Department of Human Services Budget request did include a 4% increase in the basic FIP grants, which was not successfully considered by the Governor or Legislature. Now, fourteen years later, the need is even greater; the economic plight of Iowa's dependent children and families has become more desperate. Recent Iowa data shows that 16.1% of all Iowa children live in families with incomes below the federal poverty level.

FIP-assisted families have been expected to subsist on the shrinking purchasing power of a grant level out-dated by 27 fiscal years. 67% of all families receiving FIP Basic Grants in Iowa participate in the PROMISE JOBS program and were employed, fulfilling work requirements and lowering basic grants received.

The buying power of FIP grants should be at least partially restored in the interest of the welfare of the children for whom they are provided. We recommend that this be considered a 'first step' toward an appropriate adjustment to the basic FIP grant to families.

Policy Recommendations

- Family Investment Program (FIP) grants should be adjusted by at least a 10% increase.
- FIP grant levels should be adjusted for inflation regularly. This should be an additional step in assisting struggling families to improve their family's economic position as they work themselves off of the welfare system.

Family Investment Program (FIP)

FIP provides cash assistance to needy families as they become self-supporting so children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives.

2015 HHS Poverty Guidelines for the 48 Contiguous States and the District of Columbia ¹

Size of family unit	¹ Poverty guideline *	¹ FIP Grant, maximum per month **
1	\$11,770	\$183
2	15,930	\$361
3	20,090	\$426
4	24,250	\$495
5	28,410	\$548
6	32,570	\$610
7	36,730	\$670
8	40,890	\$731

* For families with more than 8 persons, the Federal Poverty Guideline adds \$4,060 for each additional person.

** Maximum grant for families with no outside income.

¹ Federal Register to be published January 22, 2014.

¹ Department of Human Services, FIP Basic Grant schedule.



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