Advocacy Teams Listening Session: 2026 Campaign Discernment

Overview

The FCNL Advocacy Teams lobby on one strategic legislative campaign each year. In preparation for the 2026 campaign rollout, **FCNL staff will hold a listening session for Advocacy Team members** to share input and insights on a few possible topics for the 2026 campaign. The listening session will be held from **7:30-9:00 pm ET on Thursday, September 25.** The Zoom link will be sent to you by email the week of the call.

Before the listening session, please **review this document**. Share and discuss this with other members of your Advocacy Team before we gather on September 25.

How is the Advocacy Teams campaign issue decided each year?

- FCNL staff choose one strategic issue each year from a small number of issues that FCNL lobbyists are already focused on. These broader areas of focus are determined through the Priorities Process every two years.
- FCNL lobbyists and grassroots staff determine where Advocacy Teams can have the greatest impact each year based on a range of factors, including legislative strategy, grassroots momentum, and staff capacity.

What criteria do FCNL staff use to decide the issue each year?

- Hill Strategy – Is there a significant legislative opportunity to make a difference on the issue?
- Effectiveness – Would high-profile grassroots pressure on range of legislators advance the issue?
- Value Added – Would Advocacy Teams amplify the issue to Congress in an important, unique way?
- Capacity and Expertise – Do FCNL staff have the necessary expertise and capacity on the issue?
- Grassroots Strategy – How does the issue resonate with FCNL advocates across the country?

What constraints exist in determining the issue?

- The FCNL Advocacy Teams have historically focused on issues related to U.S. foreign policy because FCNL provides such a critical grassroots voice on issues related to peace and militarism. There are also a number of other factors that influence our focus on foreign policy, including program funding, strategy, and resources.
- FCNL lobbyists have specific expertise on certain issues. They develop and advocate for years to advance a particular piece of legislation, refining issue area expertise, developing relationships on the Hill and leadership within coalitions. Here are the current foreign policy legislative issues FCNL lobbyists are focused on:
    - Militarism and Human Rights: Preventing war in Mexico and domestic deployment of the military
    - Nuclear weapons: Securing a follow-on agreement to the New START treaty
    - Israel-Palestine: Blocking arms sales to Israel and increasing humanitarian aid to Gaza
    - Peacebuilding: Increasing funding for U.S. foreign assistance
    - Pentagon spending: Preventing a trillion dollar Pentagon budget
    - Climate: Invest in climate finance
    - Migration: Reopen refugee admissions program, fully fund refugee protections in FY26 appropriations: Foreign Assistance and Refugee Joint Legislative Ask.pdf

  Developing these portfolios takes time, and it cannot easily switch from one year to the next. If a lobbyist takes up a new issue area, they must cease work on other legislation, and develop new expertise and relationships.

How will this listening session inform the 2026 campaign decision?

- This is not a vote for our 2026 campaign topic. The purpose is to provide time for Advocacy Team members to offer feedback and insights on two campaign issues so we can build the most successful campaign possible.
- While we are interested in your ideas for the Advocacy Teams issue, we do not want to spend the entire session explaining why we aren't working on other issues. The best place to share your ideas for other topics is through the annual Advocacy Teams program survey each August. During the Listening Session, we are most interested in how we can together create the strongest campaign possible given the two options we've selected.