

UUSJ Newsletter – Fall 2019

Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice

An affiliate of the Chicago Area Unitarian Universalist Council

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Chair's Corner:

At the state level, for those of us in Illinois, 2019 has been a year for the passage of significant progressive legislation, plus putting the proposed Fair Tax Constitutional Amendment on the 2020 ballot. We can anticipate more good news from the Illinois General Assembly and Governor for at least the next 15 months. At the federal level, in contrast, we can expect little in the way of legislative progress before January, 2021, at the earliest. The federal level will, until the November, 2020 election, mainly be a battle between excesses and abuse of executive authority and efforts to check those excesses and abuses in the courts, and occasionally through some form of Congressional action.

UUSJ will continue its efforts at education, service and witness projects, and advocacy. Our efforts are in line what baby boomers and earlier generations are accustomed to, but have not attracted many younger activists. Those of us in UUSJ leadership would like to turn the organization over to younger generations, but when we tried outreach to younger UUs in 2018, the effort did not bear fruit. We remain open to younger UUs who would like to get involved with UUSJ at any level and would love for young

UUSJ Fall/Annual Meeting

The UUSJ Fall/Annual Meeting will take place in Unitarian Church of Evanston, 1330 Ridge Ave., Evanston, IL 60201, Sunday, November 24, from 2 to 5 p.m. The Environmental Task Force will lead a program.

UUs to take over the organization and revise it to make it appeal to other young UUs.

As always, we remain open to the formation of new task forces. Per the UUSJ By-Laws, they need to have at least 5 activists from at least 3 UU congregations. Each task force must also have a Chair or Co-Chairs to provide leadership. (A few years ago UUSJ had an Immigration Task Force with about a dozen members, but once its original Chair stepped down it dissolved, due to the fact that no one else was willing to pick up the leadership role). New task forces will get some funding from UUSJ's resources.

We hope to see many of you at UUSJ's annual meeting, which will be held on Sunday, November 24, between 2 and 5 p.m., at the Unitarian Church of Evanston. The program portion of the meeting will feature the Policy Director of the

Illinois Environmental Council, who will explain the nuts and bolts of the proposed Clean Energy Jobs Act, and answer questions about that proposed legislation. To date much of the information about that legislation has been about its goals, with little explanation as to how the goals will be brought into realization. This is our opportunity to learn those details.

Allan Lindrup, UUSJ Chair for 2019 uusj@sbcglobal.net, 773-595-4921

UUSJ Economic Justice and Homelessness Task Force Report

This task force was responsible for organizing the program for the UUSJ Summer Quarterly meeting, which was held on August 25 at the DuPage UU Church. The program was on Medicare for All: Many Options. The featured speaker, plus power point presentation, was from the Illinois Single Payer Coalition, which provided an overview of the Medicare for All bills, but also presented some information on other legislation which would expand Medicare coverage. Task Force Chair Allan Lindrup served as Respondent, to ask some of the tough questions, after which questions were considered from other attendees.

Since the last UUSJ newsletter this task force has initiated two Action Alerts. The first on May 22 was in support of Illinois SB 1786, the

This task force, which has been existent since UUSJ began in 1990, has now fallen to four active members. If it does not gain at least one new member by the time of the UUSJ annual meeting in November, it will cease to exist, as task forces must have at least five active members from at least three different UU congregations. The task force now meets by conference call on a quarterly basis. If you are someone who would be willing to join our conference calls at least half the time, plus help with some task force project during the course of each calendar year, we invite you to join the Task Force on Economic Justice and Homelessness. To express your willingness to join, at least on an exploratory basis, please contact task force Chair Allan Lindrup at uusj@sbcglobal.net or 773-595-4921.

License to Work Act, which had passed the Illinois Senate and we were trying to help get through the House. That legislation would end the practice of suspending a person's driver's license for unpaid tickets, fines, fees, etc. that do not relate to a moving vehicle violation. Suspending a driver's license can lead to loss of employment, with multiple repercussions, including

impairing one's ability to pay one's financial obligations, so such a suspension is often counter-productive. It also tends to impact low income households the most. The second Action Alert on August 3 was in support of the Federal Domestic Worker Bill of Rights, H.R. 3760, which aims to make labor rights that other workers are entitled to be also applicable to domestic workers. We were seeking to increase the number of co-sponsors in the US House, so that the bill could at least be considered by the US House. Passage by the US House would put it on path toward passage by both Houses in a future Congress.

During its meeting on July 31, 2019 the Task Force on Economic Justice and Homelessness approved a Home and Hope Booster grant nomination submitted on behalf of the Social Justice Committee of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Elgin. The nomination was in support of PADS of Elgin, which provides shelter, meals and comprehensive case management for homeless men, women and families in northern Kane County plus adjoining Hanover Township of Cook County. The shelter is open seven nights a week, 365 days a year; with day services available from 9 am to 4 pm Monday through Friday. In the last fiscal year Elgin PADS provided 14,760 nights of shelter and 26,568 meals to 421 unduplicated men, women and children.

In January, 2019 the UU Church of Elgin (UUCE) learned from Elgin Township that the new day program at PADS of Elgin was in need of volunteers to support its program. The UUCE Social Justice Team organized a group of volunteers to prepare and serve lunch to homeless individuals and families participating in this program. UUCE is currently the only organization making and serving lunch for this program.

Since May 6, 2019, 9 members of UUCE have volunteered via SignUpGenius to prepare and/or serve meals at PADS of Elgin every Monday. In addition 5 members have expressed interest in participating through donation of funds and/or items needed by PADS of Elgin for their programs like plates and utensils for meals, clothing, and personal hygiene items.

The UUCE Social Justice Committee estimates a total of 8 hours per week are spent shopping for and preparing food and a total of 3 hours onsite serving the meal. On an annual basis this would result in approximately 570 hours of volunteer time. UUCE is funding its participation in this program through Share the Plate offerings during Sunday worship and designated individual donations. The donations are used to purchase supplies used in the preparation of meals and to reimburse the expenses of those preparing the food. The UUCE fund for this program as of June 30 had \$1,467. Church members are also often preparing meals and donating items without requesting reimbursement. UUCE has been reporting to PADS of Elgin expenses of \$40-\$100 per week. We have now collected Home and Hope Booster contributions totaling \$400, which will shortly be going out to PADS of Elgin, for their day program, in the form of a \$400 Home and Hope Booster grant check.

Each year this task force verifies information and updates a Chicago and Suburban Chicago versions of *If YOU or Someone You Know Need Help* resource sheets, which target services that homeless individuals and those at risk of homelessness are likely to need. These get distributed to about 90 entities, including the UU congregations in the Chicago area, many non-profit organizations, plus social workers who

have requested them. Those entities may then make as many copies as they may need for handling out or making available during the year. The background work on the Chicago version is finished, while the suburban version is almost ready, so we anticipate updating those resource sheets and making our annual distribution within the next month.

The next task force meeting will be in October, via conference call. The date and time will be set through communications with task force members.

Allan Lindrup, task force Chair 773-595-4921 or uusj@sbcglobal.net

UUSJ Environmental Task Force Report

Congregational Reports:

- (1) First Unitarian – The Green Sanctuary Committee is reduced to six members; they supported the student climate strike; and they support social justice in SE Chicago.
- (2) The Unitarian Church of Evanston – They are recycling hazardous batteries, phones, etc.; the Green Team is using part of the capital campaign for a porous parking lot and relocate the dumpsters at the north end so the huge heavy collection trucks won't have to drive over and ruin nearly as much of it.
- (3) UU Society of Geneva – On Sept. 20 they joined students on climate strike; they will show *Superfund Choices* movie and have a pipeline speaker on Sept. 27; on October 26 they are having a harvest dinner with a recycling speaker.

Action Alerts:

The UUSJ Environmental Task Force has issued three Action Alerts since the Spring Newsletter:

- (1) On May 20 to Illinois representatives to co-sponsor SB 9 – the Coal Ash Pollution Prevention Act.
- (2) On July 15 to amend the Per and Poly-Fluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) and the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for toxic chemicals contaminating drinking water.
- (3) On September 15 to Illinois legislators supporting the Clean Energy Jobs Act HB3624 / SB2132.

Educational Handouts:

- (1) Finished and distributed Fran Sowa's "Learning from Nature – to Fight Global Warming"
- (2) We're almost finished with Allan's "Putting a Price on Carbon"
- (3) Bill Koehl is starting one on spending and refunding these carbon taxes, and
- (4) Andrew is starting one on batteries – new technology and lowering costs.

FALL ANNUAL MEETING PROGRAM – at Unitarian Church of Evanston 11/24/19

Cary Shepard – Policy Director from Illinois Environmental Council will give a program with Power Point for 40 minutes then answer questions. All questions will be written on cards. Andrew will be moderator – introduce speaker then handle questions (no more than 4 minutes each). Allan and Bill will sort cards for repetition and relevance.

NEXT MEETING

Sunday, November 10, 2:30 to 4:00 PM at Potbelly, SW corner of Lake and State, Chicago.
Andrew T. Fisher – Chair
847-492-1832 or
fishorgn1580@gmail.com

UUSJ Peace Task Force Report

The Peace Task Force met once by conference call on September 18, 2019, and will meet again by conference call at 1:00 pm on October 16. We are aiming for the third Wednesday of every month.

Three members of the Peace Task Force attended Hiroshima Day commemoration on August 6, and both Linda Groetzinger and Finley Campbell spoke. The event served as a reminder that the presence and development of nuclear weapons causes climate degradation and the threat of war, a war that could end all life on earth quickly.

In preparation for the next meeting the task force members agreed to read posts we share with each other, in order to consider how we wish to promote increased action for preventing nuclear weapons and nuclear disasters through and with our congregations. There are numerous organizations and approaches around the world.

For more information and to join the Task Force, please contact Linda Groetzinger at Lgroetzinger@yahoo.com

UUSJ Interfaith Criminal Justice Task Force Report

The Interfaith Criminal Justice Task Force has not met over the

summer. We have, however sent two Action Alerts.

1. On May 7 we supported H.B. 94 providing that inmates currently serving sentences that began prior to June 19, 1998 receive specified sentence credits if the inmate satisfactorily completes an assigned program as determined by the IL Dept. of Corrections. This bill has since passed and is enacted into law as P.A. 101-0440. The challenge now will be to provide the budgetary wherewithal to the Illinois Department of Corrections to actually offer the programs to inmates.
2. On August 20 we supported H.R. 3884, the Marijuana Opportunity Reinvestment and Expungement Act (MORE Act). This Federal proposal would remove marijuana from the Controlled Substances Act and correct the historical injustices caused by prohibition. It would allow people with marijuana convictions to petition for resentencing and expungement

In conjunction with the First Unitarian Criminal Justice Task force, a number of laws important to criminal justice reform were signed into law by Governor Pritzker. There are:

1. P.A.101-0027 Legalize personal use and sale of Marijuana
2. P.A 101-0356 Repeals provisions that committed persons shall be responsible to reimburse the Department of Corrections
3. P.A.101-0224 Provides notice upon default of fine payment 30 days prior to warrant issuance

4. P.A.100-0024 Police demographic data collection on traffic stops
5. P.A.101-0382 Limits violations of mandatory release or parole to knowingly associate with other felons, except when the association involves activities related to community programs, worship services, volunteering, engaging families, or some other pro-social activity in which there is no evidence of criminal intent
6. P.A.101-0086 Eliminates \$5 inmate co-pay for health care
7. P.A.101-0565 Non-discrimination in real estate transactions to people with records

criminal records of 880,000 people and legalize personal possession of marijuana in the future, are incremental but important reforms for fairness in the administration of justice. The elimination of the co-pay to seek medical care will reduce the debasement of prison medical care. Prison medical staff will now have to administer triage policies in a professional manner to control access to care.

Evan Freund, Chair

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All of these laws, except for the marijuana law which will clear the

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