June 9, 2019 Newsletter

POOR PEOPLE'S MORAL ACTION CONGRESS

JUNE 17-19

At the Poor People’s Moral Action Congress this June, people from all over the country will convene on Capitol Hill to frame the national political narrative around the REAL emergencies facing 140 million people today. Somebody’s been hurting our people; it’s gone on far too long and we won’t be silent anymore!

Everyone who attends will be there for the release of our Moral Budget, a forum with presidential candidates, a National Freedom School and Congressional hearing.

Register now and join us in DC this June: poorpeoplescampaign.org/tickets

CHILD SEPARATION RESPONSE ACT AND THE CHILD TRAUMA RESPONSE ACT

Stories about the Federal Government separating immigrant children from their parents and then being ill equipped to re-unite them, spurred the introduction of the Child Separation Response Act by Senator Brian Benjamin and Assembly Member Harvey Epstein. The SCAR Act requires state agencies holding immigrant children to disclose how many have been separated from their parents and a few other simple disclosures. The bill, after considerable revision to take into account the concerns of agencies, has passed the Senate overwhelmingly. A substantial bi-partisan success. The SCAR Act, however, has hit a wall in the Assembly. The claim from the Assembly is that the Senate version of the SCAR Act still has not addressed agencies concerns. We think the Senate begs to differ.

Alternatively, Assemblyman Andrew Hevesi and Senator Allesandra Biaggi have introduced the Child Trauma Response Act to ensure that children who are released from detention have much more robust support services including, most especially, legal counsel. They seek to address the well documented permanent damage to children experiencing toxic stress. While we applaud the intent of the Child Trauma Response Act, it is not clear the level of service children will receive while they are detained and before they are released to foster care and, also, whether the Child Trauma Response Act will die in Finance because it will be an add on to the state budget which is already passed.

The New York State Council of Churches, Interfaith Center of New York, New Sanctuary Coalition, MICAH Faith Table, the Junior League, Judson Memorial Church and others are seeking to work with the Assembly and the Senate to ensure the Child Trauma Response Act does all that it is supposed to do and truly be effective in identifying children separated from their parents at the beginning of detention and not just after release. We would much prefer that the SCAR Act, which mandates disclosure, be paired with the Child Trauma Response Act, believing that transparency and disclosure is essential in knowing what services are needed and for whom. We are concerned that the confusing communication between the Senate and Assembly about the strengths and limitations of these bills, will result in both bills failing amidst the political machinations. We are seeking clarification about the sources of resistance and will persist in our demand that the state of New York act knowledgeably and swiftly so that we no longer as a state aid and abet the Federal Government's outrageous child separation practices. We will update you once we have more clarification.
CLIMATE ACTION DAY, JUNE 11

Climate and Community Protection Act

We're almost at the finish line for climate action in New York State. There are just two weeks left in the legislative session and our representatives still haven't brought the Climate and Community Protection Act to the floor for a vote. It's time to go back to Albany and remind our legislators and the Governor that they work for us -- and that we demand climate action NOW.

Join NY Renews" for a day of action in Albany on June 11 to demand we pass a strong Climate and Community Protection Act NOW!

On June 11, religious leaders will also deliver their faith letter (over 110 signatures) to Governor Cuomo, Senator Stewart Cousins and Speaker Heastie during the Action between 11 and 2..

Click here, If you still wish to sign the faith leader letter in support of the Climate and Community Protection Act

Furthermore, here is the entire toolkit if you want to do any social media posts or send out an email specifically about it.

Fossil Fuel Divestment

On June 11 (the same day as the action for the CCPA) we will deliver our faith leader letter in support of divestment of fossil fuel stocks from the state pension fund. If you would like to join the over 600 faith leaders who have already signed our divestment letters, you can sign on by clicking here. We will deliver the letter to Comptroller Dinappoli's office at 3 on June 11 (after the CCPA Action) Please contact Peter Cook at 508-380-8289 or Roger Cook at 716-773-1426 if you would like to participate. Roger may have room for any one who wishes to leave from Buffalo at 6:30 and return by 9.

RESISTANCE TO PROGRESSIVE LEGISLATION ON LONG ISLAND

At this stage in the legislative session, the six Democrat state senators on Long Island are proving to be pivotal in passing progressive legislation. They are resisting the passage of these bills:

+Driver's Licenses for Immigrants.

According to City and State, "An effort to allow undocumented immigrants in New York to apply for driver's licenses is expected to pass the Assembly as early as Tuesday, but faces an uncertain future in the state Senate amid opposition from county clerks,

Gannett Albany reports.

+Rent Control Reforms

According to City and State, Gov. Andrew Cuomo threatened to hold state lawmakers hostage in Albany this summer if they can't agree to pass rent reforms before the scheduled end of the legislative session on June 19, the New York Post reports.

+HALT Act to limit Solitary Confinement,
+Fair and Timely Parole Act,
+Elder Parole Act
+Farm Worker Rights Bill
+Climate and Community Protection Act

+Less is More Bill to eliminate the use of technical violations to re-incarcerate people on parole.

Senators Martinez and Gaugran have introduced legislation to expand the kinds of charges subject to cash bail—just two month after the legislature passed partial elimination of cash bail for misdemeanor and non-violent felonies. Newsday reports.

Some legislators are reporting they have “criminal justice fatigue” feeling they did enough passing pre-trial criminal justice reforms within the context of the state budget. They are "done", they say, for this legislative session. Of course, no one is more fatigued with the slow pace of criminal justice reform than those in solitary confinement and those awaiting parole. We also believe that those who think that people, once they are already incarcerated, should not be punished even more. We believe our criminal justice system is about rehabilitation and striving to help people reform and return to society and not return. Because of the reticence of Long Island and some other suburban Senators, Senate Leader Stewart-Cousins is reluctant to bring many of the bills to the floor for a vote even though she may have majority support in her conference. Governor Cuomo also needs to be persuaded to be more forthright in his support for progressive legislation. No matter where you live, we urge you to check in with your Assembly Member and State Senator this week. In addition, place calls to Speaker Heastie, (518) 455-3791. Senate Leader Stewart-Cousins 518) 455-2585 and Governor Cuomo 518-474-8390 to get updates from them on these bills and urge their support. If you live on Long Island, the Democrat senators particularly need to hear from you.

#HALTSolitary

June 12 #HALTSolitary Day of Action in Albany:


June 18 #HALTSolitary People's Forum:

As one final push before the legislative session ends the next day, please join us for a people's forum on solitary confinement, with opportunities for survivors of solitary, family members, and other experts and community members to testify.


We will also be taking other action to make one final push to get the Senate and Assembly to pass #HALTSolitary. Transport from NYC and assistance from elsewhere. More details when you sign up.
Statement from Green Light Coalition and Allies on Reports Democratic Chairman Jay Jacobs is Sabotaging Passage of Green Light NY Bill

It’s time for the State Senate Democrats and Governor Andrew Cuomo to get serious about protecting immigrant communities.

It is the duty of our legislators, and Governor Cuomo, to pass and enact the legislation they promised to support when they asked constituents for their vote. Many Democratic candidates promised to support this policy during their campaigns just last fall, which led to the Democratic takeover of the New York State Senate. And Governor Cuomo has repeatedly expressed his support for Green Light NY, mentioning it just this week as one of the key remaining issues before the Legislature this session and previously committing to signing the bill when it is passed.

It is both lawmakers’ and the Governor’s responsibility as the leaders of the Democratic Party to help us accomplish the progressive goals that are so critical to ensuring equal opportunity and protections for every New Yorker. Democratic Party Chairman Jay Jacobs’ suggestion that Senate Democrats back away from passing the Green Light NY bill just to protect their seats is simply disturbing and absurd. This is not a time for political gamesmanship, or to abandon core principles for fear of the next election cycle. This is our opportunity to finally achieve the passage of legislation that is integral to lifting up immigrant families and communities in every corner of the state, and to see any of our lawmakers back away from this chance for the sake of electoral politics is hugely disappointing.

For all of these reasons, we are calling on the State Senate leadership to immediately bring the Green Light NY bill to the floor for a vote, and on Governor Cuomo to sign the bill immediately upon its passage. If our Democratic leaders are serious about seeking equality for all New Yorkers, they will not abandon this opportunity to protect immigrant families across the state.

A WORD ABOUT OUR LEGISLATIVE WORK

We make an effort to stay on top of pieces of legislation as they make their way through the legislative process. We keep in touch with a variety of groups which share with us key dates action plans, and information to give you the tools you need to exercise your faith in public square. We seek to have our choices informed by the social principles of our denominational partners.

We urge you to know your Assembly Member and State Senator and be in touch with them whenever possible. You are urged, of course, to meet them in Albany. We also invite you however, to be in touch with them in their district offices which is often more effective. If you have questions about the status of a particular piece of legislation, do not hesitate to contact me, Peter Cook, at 508-380-8289 or Pcook@Nyscoc.org. You can also reference past newsletters for resources, contacts, and information by going to our web page at WWW.NYSCOC.org.

If you find this service valuable, we invite you to donate online to our ministry by going to our website. You can also mail contributions to New York State Council of Churches at 1580 Central Avenue, Albany, New York 12205.

In faith,

Peter Cook