



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

ELCA Advocacy: 2019 Policy Priorities

God is calling us into the world to serve together. Shaped by the ELCA's social teaching documents and experiences of its congregations, ministries and partners, the ELCA advocates to end world hunger and stands up for policies that create opportunities to overcome poverty, promote peace and dignity, and preserve God's creation.



DOMESTIC

Formative ELCA social teaching documents include the social statements ; Economic Life: Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All and Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries, and the social message "Homelessness: A Renewal of Commitment."

AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

Secure shelter is a critical component of the foundation of the human person, the absence of which can contribute to hunger and challenges in healthcare, education, job prospects and more.

In 2019, we will work with state, national and interfaith partners to strengthen policies that reinforce housing affordability for low-income households. We will accomplish this through: • Strengthening funding levels and access to housing programs in the federal budget; • Advocating for structural housing reform through vital investments in infrastructure and programs such as the National Housing Trust; • Opposing efforts to increase rent or work eligibility requirements on low-income households, which could significantly impact seniors and people with disabilities.

Find social teaching documents from:

*ELCA.org/
Faith/Faith-
and-Society*

CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS

God richly provides for daily bread — the earth can produce enough food for everyone. Yet, many of our sisters and brothers still go hungry.

In 2019, we will • Advocate to fund, improve and strengthen child nutrition programs through measures that adequately fund and promote access to School Breakfast Programs; National School Lunch Programs and after school snack programs; Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); and other vital nutrition assistance programs; • Support keeping these programs in the federal safety net rather than state block grants to prevent long-term erosion of access.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

The ELCA is prompted to speak and to act because so many cries of suffering and despair emerge from the criminal justice system — from victims, the incarcerated, their families, communities, those wrongly convicted, they who work in the system — and have not been heard.

Building on the momentum of recent improvements in criminal justice and sentencing reform, in 2019

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we will: • Advocate to restore judges' discretion in sentencing decisions and decriminalize addiction; • Promote greater economic and racial justice by allowing thousands of federal prisoners to seek fairer punishments than those they are currently serving; • Support criminal justice funding that focuses on crime prevention and recidivism reduction which will better serve all our communities; • Promote programs that improve the dignity of women in prison populations.

HEALTHCARE

Health is central to our well-being, vital to relationships, and helps us live out our vocations in family, work and community. Each person bears some responsibility for his or her own health, but health and healthcare also depend upon other people and conditions in society and our communities.

Our commitment to ensuring the availability of quality and affordable health insurance remains a priority for many across our country. In 2019, we will: • Advocate to improve and strengthen the Affordable Care Act and expand where possible access to vulnerable populations at the edges of poverty who lack access to affordable health care insurance; • Protect and strengthen Medicaid, Medicare and disability programs to ensure the health of persons with low-incomes, seniors and those living with disabilities.



ENVIRONMENT

Formative ELCA social teaching documents include the social statement Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice.

ENVIRONMENT AND CARING FOR ALL CREATION

As stewards of this world, we are called to care for the earth and examine our behaviors toward creation. While we need to take from the land for food and sustainability, we also need to be careful that we maintain good stewardship and do not exploit the wonderful things the earth provides.

In 2019 we will: • Advocate with Congress and the Administration for strong environmental protection regulation to protect all of creation; • Support climate finance measures that reduce emissions and enhance resilience to negative climate change impacts; • Prepare educational materials making connections between the common thread of the environment with hunger, poverty, health concerns, migration, disaster response and national security concerns; • Support Lutheran Disaster Response with climate change and disaster connections as well as stewardship of the land; • Work with Lutheran Restoring Creation and ELCA Stewardship on starting Creation Care Coaches Training; • Work with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on federal lead policy, starting with urban areas; • Work with EPA on promoting public gardens; • Work with associations and faith-based entities on just transition issues in areas where renewable energy technologies are expanding.



INTERNATIONAL

Formative ELCA social teaching documents include the social statement For Peace in God's World; and the social messages "Human Rights" and "Gender-based Violence."

CONFLICT PREVENTION, PEACEBUILDING, HUMAN RIGHTS

Concern for the well-being of others lies at the very heart of Christian faith. Christians have a variety of social identifications through their nation of origin, race, ethnicity or political affiliation, but all

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Christians have a common identity as children of a loving creator.

In addition to promoting and advancing human rights, we will work to increase capacity and support for U.S. and multilateral initiatives/programs that aim to build peace and prevent conflicts around the world. Specifically, we will: • Advocate for passage of the Global Fragility and Violence Reduction Act; • Ensure Congress allocates funds for the Complex Crisis Fund in the FY2020 budget; • Encourage continued U.S. engagement in South Sudan, especially in the peace process as well as humanitarian and development assistance; • Monitor U.S. Cuba policy and encourage the Administration to take positive and mutually beneficial steps that will help move the two countries toward normal relations; • Work with foreign policy staff in the Administration and Congress to promote values of good governance and inclusive participation in the electoral processes.

FOREIGN ASSISTANCE

“For all” in the title of the ELCA social statement on economic life refers to the whole household of God—all people and creation throughout the world. We should assess economic activities in terms of how they affect “all,” especially people living in poverty.

In 2019, we will work to build broad support for international development and humanitarian aid in Congress. Specifically, we will: • Advocate to bolster funding levels to international poverty-focused programs as appropriate in the International Affairs budget; • Oppose efforts by Administration or Congress to cut funds to these programs; • Work to improve ways some programs are administered or implemented to ensure programmatic efficiencies and accountability; • Monitor the Administration’s review of foreign assistance and respond accordingly; and • Advocate for passage of legislation that focuses on improving specific poverty-focused programs, such as those enhancing child and maternal health.

GENDER JUSTICE

The ELCA is committed to the continual work of prayer, learning, reflection, discernment, and action to resist patriarchy and sexism as we live together in community into the promised abundant life God intends for all.

In 2019, we will work to ensure that prevention of gender-based violence becomes a priority in U.S. foreign policy and diplomatic engagement. In addition, we will promote gender integration throughout development and humanitarian programs. In doing so, we will: • Advocate for passage of legislation that seeks to improve the quality of life for women and girls globally, such as the International Violence Against Women Act; • Oppose efforts to dismantle the Office of Global Women’s Issues, housed in the Department of State; and • Monitor and analyze the U.S. government’s gender-focused program activities and provide feedback to appropriate entities.

These policy priorities focus the work of ELCA Advocacy staff in Washington, D.C. on current issues central to God’s vision of a just world where all are fed.

More information is available from:

- elca.org/advocacy
- *the ELCA Advocacy blog - <http://blogs.elca.org/advocacy/>*
- *social media - [@ELCAadvocacy](https://twitter.com/ELCAadvocacy)*
- *the Action Center - elca.org/advocacy/actioncenter*

Among resources are tips for planning your engagement in D.C. and your local community.

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MIGRATION

Formative ELCA social teaching documents include the social messages "Immigration" and "Human Rights."

ADDRESSING ROOT CAUSES OF MIGRATIONS

Thousands of children and families from Central America continue to flee their communities and search for safety in the U.S. As a church, we envision a world in which children and families do not have to leave their communities in order to live a safe and sufficient life.

In 2019, we can help address this goal with advocacy and AMMPARO measures through: • Strengthening funds from the U.S. government to anti-corruption mechanisms and development programs that are culturally appropriate for Central American communities; • Opposing US. Foreign policies that support the militarization of Central American countries or prevent people from seeking protection in a country where they feel safe.

PROTECTING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES WHO FLEE THEIR COMMUNITIES AND THOSE WHO ARE LONG-TERM U.S. RESIDENTS

Our faith calls Lutherans to see our neighbors as ourselves. As people flee their communities, the ELCA will continue to celebrate and stand alongside our immigrant neighbors.

In 2019, we can help address this goal through: • Support of robust asylum and trafficking prevention laws alongside laws that provide a pathway to citizenship to long-term residents of the U.S.; • Opposition to attempts to weaken asylum laws or other laws that protect vulnerable children and families fleeing their communities.



ADDITIONAL

Formative ELCA social teaching documents include the social statement Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity & Culture.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE AND VOTER PROTECTIONS

We are called to conversation and prayer around our role as U.S. residents and as people of faith in ensuring our election systems promote dignity and respect for all.

In 2019, we will • Advocate to ensure access to voting by the broadest number of eligible voters in our nation; • Promote laws and regulations that prevent efforts to disenfranchise voters on election day or create burdens to eligible voters in voter registration process; • Support efforts to keep money out of politics and to oppose repeal of the Johnson Amendment; • Support strong funding for the Census to ensure that the whole population is adequately represented in Congress.

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You are invited to live out your baptismal identity through learning about issues and acting with and on behalf of your neighbor with the ELCA Advocacy network.

*Members of the ELCA Advocacy network receive updates and notifications at moments when action is most impactful. **Sign up from elca.org/advocacy/signup.***

Thank you for your engagement!