



2023 FEDERAL POLICY PRIORITIES

As Christians, our cares, concerns and commitments run deep and wide. We advocate to end world hunger and stand up for policies that create opportunities to overcome poverty, foster peace and human dignity, preserve God's creation, advance racial and gender justice, and promote good order in public life. ELCA Witness in Society staff advocate by building relationships with policymakers, promoting legislation, taking joint action with values-aligned partners, providing input to federal agencies and much more. Shaped by the ELCA's social teaching documents and the experiences of our congregations, ministries and partners, the following are our federal advocacy priorities for 2023.

"The witness of this church in society flows from its identity as a community that lives from and for the Gospel. Faith is active in love; love calls for justice in the relationships and structures of society. It is in grateful response to God's grace in Jesus Christ that this church carries out its responsibility for the well-being of society and the environment."

- ELCA social statement *The Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective*, pp. 1-2

"God who 'executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry' (Psalm 146:7) is revealed in Jesus, whose mission was 'to bring good news to the poor ... release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor' (Luke 4: 18-19)."

- ELCA social statement *Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All*, p. 2



DOMESTIC POLICY

- Promote legislation to reduce **poverty** and unjust economic disparities particularly through the appropriations process. Fight **hunger** by protecting and adequately funding food security and child nutrition programs.
- Help assure access to affordable, quality **health care** and expand federal resources to help address HIV/AIDS. Work to close racial, gender and economic disparities in health outcomes.
- Work to reduce **homelessness** and **homeownership disparities** by expanding housing affordability, sharing innovative housing solutions from the experiences of faith-based ministries, increasing access to equal housing opportunities, and addressing existing patterns of segregation.
- Improve and make permanent federal programs that manage community rebuilding after **natural disasters** and uplift recommendations of impacted churches and ELCA ministries in public policy consideration.
- Recognize, examine and begin to address **historic injustices** such as the legacy of Indian boarding schools; support the commission for the study of reparation proposals for African Americans.
- Promote **criminal justice and policing reforms**, continue to advance bipartisan bills to **reduce mass incarceration**, and address systemic racial bias in state and federal incarceration systems.
- Monitor and support legislation and discourse that advance **gender justice** and raise awareness of gender-based crime, including domestic violence, human trafficking, sexual assault, and the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women.

(domestic policy continued)

EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC LEGISLATION AND POLICY — Making permanent the earned income tax credit (EITC) and the expanded child tax credit (CTC), which lifted millions of children out of poverty before its expiration in 2022. Defending the low-income housing tax credit, the Housing First homeless model, SNAP benefits in the Farm Bill, and funding for disaster response. Supporting reintroduction of the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act.

“We also advocate an earthly peace that provides security from violence and aggression, seeks just order in place of tyranny or anarchy, checks unrestrained power, and defends and enhances the life of people who are poor and powerless.”

- ELCA social statement For Peace in God's World, p. 7



INTERNATIONAL POLICY

- Ensure robust federal funding for programs that work to fight **global hunger and poverty**; enhance international food security programs, including the food and nutrition programs authorized in the Farm Bill. Promote efficient **humanitarian relief**, especially in response to natural disasters and conflicts.
- Advance **global health** programs to address pandemics, epidemics, and endemic diseases including HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and COVID-19.
- Strengthen U.S. government engagement and investment in international **gender equity and equality**; work to prevent gender-based violence, promote girls' education, protect women and girls in humanitarian situations, and attend to their economic and health care needs.
- Urge investment in **conflict prevention and peace-building** programs that address causes of conflict before they occur, and promote nonmilitary solutions to conflict. Ensure effective and just implementation of existing laws and protect the **human rights** of civilians and minority groups.

EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC LEGISLATION AND POLICY — Introducing and passing the Keeping Girls in School Act and the Safe from the Start Act; reauthorizing the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and U.S. Farm Bill. Engaging around conflict zones including but not limited to Myanmar and South Sudan.



SPECIAL NOTES

SPECIAL NOTE ON THE FARM BILL: Certain federal policy decisions defy categories such as domestic and international policy, intersecting with multiple areas of concern for Lutherans, and impacting our lives and the lives of our neighbors near and far.

- The Farm Bill is such a category-defying piece of legislation, and the **farm bill reauthorization process** is now actively underway. This is an opportunity to safeguard the foundations of our food systems — from the well-being of farm owners and farm workers to the farming methods that ensure the health and sustainability of the land, people, flora and fauna, and to the food resources distributed locally and internationally to fight hunger. The ELCA supports a farm bill that will promote a strong and resilient food-supply chain and provide needed nutrition through domestic and international programs. ELCA advocates will urge Congress to take the opportunity to reduce hunger and poverty in the United States, promote food sovereignty on tribal lands and encourage sustainable stewardship of our resources.

(special notes continued)

SPECIAL NOTE ON ELCA-WIDE STRATEGIES: Certain strategies and declarations of the ELCA also call for action in multiple categories and across multiple ELCA programs beyond advocacy.

"[A]s people of biblical faith, who live together in trust and hope, our primary motivation is the call to be God's caregivers and to do justice."

- ELCA social statement
Caring for Creation:
Vision, Hope, and Justice
(p. 8)



ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

- Monitor and influence **implementation of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)**, the largest investment in the nation's history for mitigating climate change, with emphasis on the influx of funding for renewable energy and carbon reduction programs.
- In this kairos moment for the planet, urge passage of policy to further address **climate change** and to reflect urgency for mitigating impacts of **environmental degradation**.
- Further develop **sustainability practices** through advocating policy and legislation that call for a better quality of life today without the shortchanging of future generations.
- Lift up the concern of **environmental justice** in all energy and environmental policy and highlight the disparate impact of pollution and climate change on low-income communities, ethnic minorities, developing nations and Indigenous lands.

EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC LEGISLATION AND POLICY — Advocating for passage of the Environmental Justice for All Act. Input and influence on the final form of permitting bills related to energy production. Supporting effective implementation of the IRA and reauthorization of the Farm Bill.



MIGRATION POLICY

- Promote respect for international principles defending the **human rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers** while seeking to ensure the immediate protection, safety and dignity of children, families and those who have come to the United States to seek protection from persecution.
- Seek just and humane immigration policies and legislation, including actions to strengthen and expand **refugee resettlement** and facilitate safe and orderly migration pathways.
- Foster **social integration and inclusion** of immigrants in the United States by advocating to create pathways for members of our communities to apply for durable legal status in this country.
- Address the **drivers of migration** pushing many to flee their communities — such as violence, persecution, lack of economic opportunity, and environmental degradation — by calling for foreign assistance and policy interventions that allow our neighbors to live safe and sufficient lives.

EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC LEGISLATION AND POLICY — Reintroducing bipartisan bills including the American Dream and Promise Act and the Afghan Adjustment Act.

"In our own country, we support a generous policy of welcome for refugees and immigrants. We pledge to continue our church's historic leadership in caring for refugees and immigrants."

- ELCA social statement
For Peace in God's World,
pp. 20-21

“Neither inaction nor weak action is an option for the ELCA if it intends truly to accompany the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, the LWF Jerusalem program, and other partners in this time of urgent crisis and opportunity.”

- “Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine,” Section IV, p. 54

“Some people object to the church involving itself in matters related to government, in ‘politics.’ Taking partisan stances is not the church’s role, but ‘politics’ has to do with negotiating how the benefits and burdens of living in a society are shared.”

- ELCA social message “Government and Civic Engagement in the United States: Discipleship in a Democracy,” p. 2



MIDDLE EAST POLICY

- Maintain U.S. **humanitarian assistance** levels for the Palestinian people, bilaterally and via the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).
- **Oppose settlement expansion** in the Palestinian territory. Defend the human rights of Palestinians living in the occupied territory by pressuring the U.S. government to publicly oppose Israeli government practices such as home demolitions and property seizures.
- Challenge Israel's increasingly **militarized response** to Palestinians living under the occupation, especially the policy of child detention. Seek to hold Israeli military forces **accountable for human rights violations**.

EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC LEGISLATION AND POLICY — Defending sustained support for East Jerusalem hospitals, including Augusta Victoria Hospital. Urging legislation requiring accountability for Palestinian child detention.



CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

- Share models for **depolarizing exchange** and engage in advocacy with this lens. Provide education and resources to support Lutheran communities and individuals as they develop civic relationships that **build trust** amid our differences. **Foster dialogue** based in faith; lead healthy community conversations toward the common good.

HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

Our ministry of advocacy is a public witness to God's love for our neighbors, ourselves and all creation. In addition to activity in Washington, D.C., on federal advocacy priorities, this public witness is also organized by ELCA-affiliated [state public policy offices](#), through our ELCA [Corporate Social Responsibility](#) program and by [Lutheran Office for World Community](#) representation to the United Nations. Central to all these efforts is the advocacy of members, congregations and synods.

Connect with the ELCA Advocacy Network for updates and invitations to action at [ELCA.org/advocacy/signup](https://www.elca.org/advocacy/signup). Find resources at [ELCA.org/resources/advocacy](https://www.elca.org/resources/advocacy) and engage with the community on social media @ELCAadvocacy.