



2021 ELCA FEDERAL POLICY PRIORITIES

In the ELCA we believe that, through baptism, God is calling us into the world to serve together. Shaped by the ELCA's social teaching documents and the experiences of its congregations, ministries and partners, we advocate to end world hunger and stand up for policies that create opportunities to overcome poverty, promote peace and dignity, preserve God's creation and promote racial and gender justice.

You will find ELCA faith-based advocates building relationships with policy makers, taking joint action with values-sharing issue partners, writing letters, making public comments, talking with neighbors, asking questions in town hall meetings — listening, learning, educating and visibly and skillfully asserting policy considerations guided by faith foundations.

In addition to faith-based advocacy organized by local congregations and synods, by Lutheran state public policy offices and by Lutheran Office for World Community representation to the United Nations (UN), the ELCA is active in Washington, D.C. Following are policy priorities on the federal horizon for 2021.

DOMESTIC POLICY

Hunger and poverty – Urge nutrition investments in COVID-19 legislation and address racial and ethnic disparities in food insecurity nationwide. Restore, protect and adequately fund child nutrition programs, ensure access to paid family and sick leave, and advocate to expand the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit for low-income families. Urge increasing the federal minimum wage to \$15 per hour so that working families can meet basic and fundamental needs.

Criminal justice reform – Address racial bias in criminal legal and carceral systems by promoting fairer sentencing; and support restorative reentry programs in our communities through federal and state funding and reforms. End mass incarceration, address racial bias in criminal legal and carceral systems, promote fairer sentencing and support restorative reentry programs in our communities through federal and state funding and reforms.

Civil and human rights – Safeguard and promote protections for communities who face barriers, unjust treatment, violence or inequalities on the basis of race, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation or class. Support action to address historic injustices, including a Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African-Americans and a Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policy.

Healthcare – Expand healthcare access to poor- and low-income families and remove race-based barriers to healthcare for communities of color to improve health outcomes and reduce healthcare costs. Monitor and engage with policy response to opioid addiction and COVID-19 public health crises, including equitable access to vaccines that doesn't replicate systemic racism and other cultural inequity.

- **GROUNDING** - [ELCA social teaching resources](#) include the social statements *Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor*, *Freed In Christ: Race, Ethnicity and Culture* and *The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries*.



DOMESTIC POLICY: HOUSING

Budget concerns – Increase shelter, housing and development budget resources with a special focus on rural development, HIV/AIDS housing assistance, and affordable housing for seniors.

Infrastructure – Advocate in anticipated infrastructure overhaul planning inclusion of low-income household considerations and housing development.

Fair housing and civil rights – Reverse implementation of harmful regulation policies that enable racial and gender discrimination and promote policies that further address disparities in access to safe housing.

Disaster response – Improve federal programs that manage community rebuilding after natural disasters and uplift recommendations of impacted churches and ELCA ministries in public policy consideration.

- **GROUNDING** - [ELCA social teaching resources](#) include the social message "Homelessness: A Renewal of Commitment" and the social statement *Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All*.



ENVIRONMENT
POLICY

Creation care - Advance policies geared toward bridging ideological divides while addressing the impacts of environmental degradation. Advocate for comprehensive energy, greenhouse gas emissions mitigation and adaptation legislation for reaching carbon neutrality.

Climate and environmental justice - Promote policies addressing the interconnectivity of environmental, economic and social issues that advance strategies for remedying historic and eliminating future systemic biases and injustices impacting vulnerable communities.

Sustainability - Advance policies and legislation calling for a better quality of life today without shortchanging future generations. Incorporate build back better principles associated with environmentally caused disasters. Promote best practices in rural and urban communities and agriculture sustainability. Advocate for climate finance and migration policies, infrastructure upgrades and development choices providing thriving energy choices and smart technologies.

- **GROUNDING** - [ELCA social teaching resources](#) include the social statements *Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice* and *Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity and Culture*.

INTERNATIONAL
POLICY

Foreign assistance - Include budget funds and appropriations for international development, humanitarian and health programs, including international COVID-19 relief and vaccine access, and encourage efficient and effective program implementation of U.S. aid for our global siblings. Expand debt relief and encourage investment in human needs.

Conflict prevention/peacebuilding - Promote critical investment in civilian conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities, and support prohibition of U.S. arms sales and oppose proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Gender justice and human rights protections - Advocate for policies that promote gender justice and rights-based implementation of international programs to meet the needs of women, girls, and other marginalized populations.

- **GROUNDING** - [ELCA social teaching resources](#) include the social statement *For Peace in God's World* and social message "Human Rights."



MIGRATION POLICY

Rights of migrants and refugees - Advocate for an immigration system that prioritizes human rights, justice, family unity and reunification. Promote access to domestic programs, as well universal COVID-19 relief and vaccines. Strengthen Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and temporary protected status (TPS), in addition to pathways for gaining permanent legal status and citizenship.

Enforcement and detention - Advocate for immigration detention and enforcement reforms and support community-based alternatives to detention. Denounce the militarization of the border and externalization of policies that exacerbate the risks and discrimination faced by migrants.

Asylum and refugee systems - Reverse regulations that prevent those fleeing violence and persecution access to protection. Strengthen protections for migrants at high risk of violence and trafficking. Advocate for restoring and rebuilding the United States' historic leadership in refugee resettlement.

Foreign policy and climate threats - Insist that trade, development and disaster-recovery projects proceed with meaningful consultation with affected communities. Coordinate with local stakeholders on climate resiliency strategies to address climate migration.

- **GROUNDING** - [ELCA social teaching resources](#) include the social messages "Immigration" and "Gender-based Violence" and sanctuary denomination action of the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly.



MIDDLE EAST POLICY

Inclusive approach - Ensure that all parties to the Israeli-Palestinian are respected and included in negotiations towards a just and lasting peace based on international law. This means reengaging with the Palestinian Authority, allowing for a reopening of Palestinian representative offices in the United States as well as the U.S. Consulate in East Jerusalem and ensuring unimpeded access to consular services for Palestinians.

Settlements - Restate the U.S. position that settlements are illegal under international law, halt further Israeli settlement construction Clarify that U.S. policy does not recognize illegal Israeli settlements. Impose consequences on the Israeli government for future settlement activities it authorizes or undertakes.

Humanitarian actors - End politicization of humanitarian aid. Resume funding to the Palestinian Authority, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency and other UN and humanitarian actors working in the West Bank and Gaza. Work with Congressional leaders and the Administration to ensure funds appropriated for humanitarian programs in the West Bank and Gaza (e.g., Augusta Victoria Hospital) are obligated.

Ensure accountability - Hold the Government of Israel accountable for use of military assistance that violates the human rights of Palestinians, such as the illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories, the detention of Palestinian children in military prisons, the violent repression of peaceful protestors, and demolitions of Palestinian homes and communities. Calls will be made for ensuring that no U.S. funding to Israel is used for these purposes. Call for re-evaluation of military aid to the Middle East region which does not need to be more heavily militarized. Urge an end to punitive visa bans, family entry bans, and asset freezes on select officials of the International Criminal Court. Stop similar actions against those participating in investigations of Israeli government practices that deny human rights.

Occupied territories - Reiterate the U.S. position that the occupied territories are subject to international law and are not recognized as parts of Israel. Reverse U.S. government policy which recognizes Israel's annexation of the occupied Syrian Golan Heights and occupied East Jerusalem and has supported Israeli annexation of significant portions of the West Bank. Establish policy to ensure that products made in Israeli settlements and industrial zones in the occupied territories cannot be labeled, "Made in Israel."

Freedom to speak and act - Make clear that criticism of the Government of Israel, including support for boycotts, divestment, and sanctions actions, is constitutionally protected and legitimate speech. Oppose anti-Semitism as well as efforts to conflate it with prohibitions on speech critical of Israel and other actions making it illegal to speak in support boycotts, divestment and sanctions.

Other regional issues - Support efforts to respond to other regional issues, e.g., ensure humanitarian aid to Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen and stop the war in Yemen. Support the U.S. rejoining the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran, the Permanent Five UN Security Council Member States, Germany and the European Union.

- **GROUNDING** – ELCA Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine (2005) and subsequent Churchwide Assembly actions; [ELCA social teaching resources](#) include the social statement *For Peace in God's World* and social message "Human Rights."

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Dialogue in the public sphere – Raise awareness of presence and priorities of houses of worship and social ministries situated in every congressional district and county across our nation wherein Lutherans are free to serve with and for our neighbors in vibrant civic life.

Election security and voter access reforms – Uphold pressing voting rights and share civic engagement tools such as holding registration drives, aware of historic and contemporary voter suppression in electoral process participation.

- **GROUNDING** – [ELCA social teaching resources](#) include the social message "Government and Civic Engagement: Discipleship in a Democracy" and social statement *Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective*.

How can you get involved?

Become part of the ELCA Advocacy network at [ELCA.org/advocacy/signup!](https://www.elca.org/advocacy/signup) You will receive monthly updates on policy activity and be invited to take action at moments when your voice and experience will have an impact. Middle East policy information and networking is available from [ELCA.org/peacenotwalls](https://www.elca.org/peacenotwalls).

Find resources for your advocacy efforts at [ELCA.org/resources/advocacy](https://www.elca.org/resources/advocacy) and a community with which to engage on social media at [@ELCAAdvocacy](https://twitter.com/ELCAAdvocacy). Together we endeavor to live into our baptismal covenant to serve all people, following the example of Jesus, and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth.