

AFSC New Hampshire Program Highlights

OCTOBER 2018 TO SEPTEMBER 2019

2019 - The Year We Abolished the Death Penalty

“If we let those who kill turn us into killers then evil triumphs and we all lose.” Representative Renny Cushing, March 7, 2019

AFSC and New Hampshire Quakers first called for NH death penalty abolition in 1985. Twelve years later, we helped create the NH Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, which brought together family members of murder victims, exonerated death row survivors, faith leaders, former law enforcement and judicial officials, human rights activists, and lawmakers from both major political parties. Then it took another 22 years, but in 2019, the state at last repealed the death penalty. Following a veto by Governor Chris Sununu, override votes squeaked through the House and Senate by single votes. Barbara Keshen, the coalition’s chairperson, called AFSC’s role “indispensable.”

“Arnie Alpert knows how to run a social justice marathon. He never let our many defeats discourage us or divert us from our mission,” Keshen said.



With Arnie Alpert, Rep. Renny Cushing, Barbara Keshen, and John-Michael Dumais looking on, Senate President Donna Soucy signs papers sending the death penalty repeal bill to Governor Sununu. The governor’s veto was later overturned by votes of the House and Senate.

Action for Immigrant Justice



The Interfaith Vigil for Immigrant Justice is a regular expression of solidarity with immigrants under threat of deportation. It also fosters a community dedicated to resistance and transformation.

No issue demanded more attention last year than response to the federal government’s escalating attack on immigrants. Our actions included co-sponsorship with the United Church of Christ of weekly visits with immigrants held at the county jail in Dover to provide moral support and information about their legal rights. We also convened monthly conference calls to share the latest information on federal and state legislation, police policies, legal support, and solidarity initiatives. With the NH Council of Churches, Granite State Organizing Project, United Valley Interfaith Project, and others, we led the Interfaith Vigils for Immigrant Justice twice a month outside the federal building in Manchester, where immigrants have “check-in” appointments with ICE, never knowing if they’ll be able to leave the building or be sent to jail. In August, we supported the second Solidarity Walk for Immigrant Justice, which concluded with a ritual of mourning and resistance outside the Dover jail with 500 participants and detained immigrants observing from inside the facility.

Working with AFSC staff based in Washington, DC and spread throughout the country (and into Mexico and Central America), the NH Program makes sure our federal government officials get our perspective on how to end a cruel system marked by racism, xenophobia, militarism, and family separation. In addition, Maggie gave informative presentations to church, school, and community groups in Milford, Concord, Kittery, Portsmouth, Peterborough, and Canterbury.



AFSC interns Amanda Sprusansky and Martin Toe learned their way around the State House and testified for a higher minimum wage.

Also at the State House

In 2019, AFSC continued to mobilize members of the faith community to be visible supporters of legislation advancing civil rights, social justice, and the interests of workers and tenants. We took special interest in stopping legislation which would have forced NH officials to participate in immigration enforcement and advancing a bill enabling unauthorized immigrants to get driver licenses. We also joined with the NH Alliance for a Moral Economy to promote restoration of the state's minimum wage and raising it to \$15. Neither of those constructive policies were realized this year, but we can see progress in the right direction.

State House Watch

"This is - hands down - one of the most comprehensive sources of legislative information in a state where almost no in-depth State House reporting is available." - a reader

2019 was year nine for our State House Watch newsletter and year seven for our radio show, both of which aimed to reach the activist community with timely, accessible, and accurate information about public policy in the making. Nearly 95% of the people who responded to our annual survey said they took action based on information they received from State House Watch! Another reader commented, "as a vehicle for informing the public about a wide range of issues, it's arguably the best thing in our state."



When legislation to raise the minimum wage finally passed, AFSC and our allies were ready. Every weekday for the next six weeks, members of the NH Alliance for a Moral Economy visited the governor's office to deliver black pens, with "RAISE THE MINIMUM WAGE" printed on the side.



Members of Change for Concord attend a “Know Your Rights” training with the ACLU at the AFSC office.

Bringing Change to Concord

Change for Concord, the young adult activist group supported by AFSC through our local community organizing internship program, trained members in the workings of city government, skills which came in handy as they campaigned for free access to meeting space at the Concord’s new community center on the Heights. Members also met with the ACLU to learn about their rights in relationship to the police and participated in the Friends Committee on National Legislation’s “Spring Lobby Weekend,” which focused on immigrants’ rights. Martin Toe, the community organizing intern, developed his own skills, too, by attending State House hearings and offering testimony on issues including immigration and the minimum wage.



Sabrina Butler, a member of Witness to Innocence, speaks with legislators about getting sent to death row for a crime she did not commit.

Phil Sletten, a budget specialist with the NH Fiscal Policy Institute, with Maggie in the WNHN-LP studio.



Fred Portnoy is the volunteer producer for “State House Watch Radio.”



photo by Bill Wilson

Meet the AFSC staff: Martin Toe, Community Organizing Intern; Maggie Fogarty, Co-Director; and Arnie Alpert, Co-Director.



American Friends Service Committee

NEW HAMPSHIRE PROGRAM

4 Park Street, Suite 304, Concord NH 03301

(603) 224-2407

afsc.org/nh

We Do Not Walk Alone

The NH Program does most of our work in collaboration with others through coalitions and informal networks. In the past year, we have worked especially closely with the Granite State Organizing Project, United Valley Interfaith Project, NH Council of Churches, ACLU-NH, the United Church of Christ NH Conference, New American Africans, Open Democracy, NH Peace Action, UU Action NH, the Union of Concerned Scientists, and Rights & Democracy. AFSC has been convening the statewide Immigrant Rights Network since November of 2016. We are part of GSOP, the Concord Coalition to End Homelessness, the NH Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, the NH Alliance for a Moral Economy, the NH Immigrant Solidarity Network, the Seacoast Interfaith Sanctuary Coalition, the NH Poor People's Campaign, and the Martin Luther King Coalition. The Nuclear Weapons Working Group is jointly sponsored by AFSC and NH Peace Action. Our "State House Watch" radio show is produced and broadcast from WNHN-LP.



When the Solidarity Walk for Immigrant Justice reached the Dover jail, detained immigrants signalled their appreciation through the windows.

The Support Committee and staff of the NH Program give sincere thanks to all the donors and volunteers who made our work possible in the past year. Our funders include the Clowes Fund, the Anne Slade Frey Charitable Trust, and the NH Charitable Foundation, including the "You Have Our Trust" fund. Please visit our website for more information and to make a donation.



If you use Facebook, search for American Friends Service Committee-NH Program. "Like" us. After all, we are your Friends!

