



Interfaith Working Group on Foreign Assistance

Faith Leader Fly-In Recap 2018

Key Takeaways:

- ★ The Interfaith Working Group on Foreign Assistance (IWGFA) Fly-In is a truly unique experience, bringing forth a diverse selection of influential and targeted faith leaders all advocating for robust PFDA funding
 - There was also an “ask” surrounding the reauthorization of GFSA
 - This working group is the only DC-based coalition that utilizes a moral, faith-based lens to advocate specifically on international humanitarian and development programs
 - Members of DC staff were able to share our Appropriations Request Letter with appropriators outside of State and Foreign Ops, including members of Ag and Defense appropriations
 - This experience also gives faith leaders the ability to meet and network with other faith leaders, sharing the work that they’re doing in their congregations and districts
 - Our event gathered a substantial amount of media coverage, ranging from a spotlight in Politico Magazine to several op-eds from participating faith leaders featured in their local papers
 - Work in collaboration with The ONE Campaign to build inter-organizational relationships and showcase the overwhelming support for faith-based and poverty-focused advocacy among DC staff and fly-in participants

Our Goals:

- ★ Convene a high-profile summit to not only increase the value of the IWGFA for coalition member organizations, but also to enhance visibility of the International Affairs budget
- ★ Educate and strengthen relationships with key policymakers to forward international policy objectives
- ★ Cultivate and empower a network of dedicated and influential faith leaders that engage in long term awareness raising and advocacy efforts

Results:

- ★ **60 total Congressional Meetings**
 - **40 meetings** with **Republican** offices
 - **20 meetings** with **Democratic** offices
 - **18 member-level** meetings
 - **20 total states** represented
 - A total of **32 faith leaders** attended
 - **17 meetings** with **SFOPS** committee members
- ★ Since then, **two** of the offices met with (Senators Ben Cardin and Marco Rubio) have cosponsored the Global Food Security Reauthorization Act
- ★ Developed and updated internal and external advocacy materials, maintaining consistency of the IWGFA brand

- ★ Held many successful meetings, collecting reports of each office's stance regarding our ask, any needed follow-up, and noting down each office's interests/priorities

Improvements For Next Year:

- ★ Staffing
 - Ensuring we have more than enough people volunteering with the run-of-show
 - This includes volunteers from the co-chair organization, Church World Services, as well as people from member organizations
- ★ Increased coalition-wide participation
 - While there are over 50 organizations within the working group, only a small subset of organizations actually take part in the fly-in
 - What actions need to be taken in order to receive a wider-level of participation?
 - Despite the incentives that already exist
- ★ Diversity of interfaith leaders
 - Would love to see less of a concentration of Christian faiths represented
 - Need more people representing both the Muslim and Jewish faiths
 - More faith leaders of color
 - This year we had no faith leaders of Asian, Hispanic, or Middle Eastern descent
 - More females
 - There was not an equal ratio of men and women
 - Challenges:
 - We aren't in charge of recruiting every faith leader, as they are each handpicked by our member organizations
- ★ Possibly incorporating a panel discussion with PFDA experts, as part of the fly-in events
- ★ Finances
 - Rearranging the financial system of the event with Marty



THE HOPE OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE

BY: VERNON BURGER II
HIS VOICE GLOBAL FOUNDER

Pictured above: Sameerah Siddiqui and Vernon Burger

I recently went to Washington DC in order to take part in some congressional meetings that allowed me to talk about the ways HVG helps to defend the cause of vulnerable women and children.

One of the areas we focused on is the desire to see the International Affairs Budget to be protected. Currently the submitted budget of The President is to cut this budget line by 30%. So, why is this a big deal and why should it be to you as well?

1. In polls, most Americans believe the US gives 20-25% to foreign aid. In reality we only give 1%! We currently give 60% less to foreign aid than we did in the Reagan administration.
2. Some people will say, "Why are you getting involved in this political discourse?" Well, first, politics are sacred. They are not ultimate, but they are sacred and I believe we should speak hope into this sphere of society. Next, the issue at hand is that you and I are going to pay taxes no matter what. We need to speak up for HOW we want our dollars spent. Therefore, I believe that one of the greatest ways to express a "dollar of mercy and hope" is to vocalize that I believe we should support those who are in need.
3. Some will say, "Well, we have our own deficit, how can we be giving money away?" If this is your stance, think of it from a national security standpoint. The "3 D's" of national defense are: defense, diplomacy, and development. The last two, diplomacy and development, are funded through the International Affairs Budget. As General Mattis has said in the past, "If you do not fully fund the State Department then you will need to fund me bullets." Yes, this is a harsh reality.
4. I was able to meet with the state representatives in Missouri (where Amber and I live) as well. Emmanuel Cleaver's (Kansas City Area) office was warm and encouraging. They support the defense of not cutting the International Affairs Budget. Claire McCaskill's office was attentive and

compassionate. They also supported the keeping of the International Affairs Budget. Roy Blunt's office was a courteous and also expressed the desire to see this line not cut in the budget. I give all of these examples so you know this is not a partisan issue, so to speak. People on "both sides of the aisle" predominately see the importance in keeping this line item fully funded.

5. Some will say, "Shouldn't the church be doing all of this?" I would say it really does take both. There are some areas the church can speak into that the government cannot and vice versa. The best way forward is not for an "either/or" approach. It is much better understood as a "both/and".

This cut would be devastating to the most vulnerable and as you know, when we talk about vulnerable women and children, especially at HVG, we do not first see a "social issue". We see faces. We see names. We see stories. This is also why I am speaking up. We are not talking about faceless causes. We are talking about real people who are made in the image of God and are stunningly sacred.

What can you do?

1. I would encourage you to really look into the International Affairs Budget and speak up to your state representatives on the need to keep this in place.
2. Understand that your dollar is going to be spent no matter what. It is a matter of speaking into the values you want your dollar to represent.
3. Know that your voice matters. Speak with compassion and conviction.
4. If you would like an in depth PDF that helps to break down the International Affairs budget, along with its importance, please shoot me an email: vernon@hisvoiceglobal.com

