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Dear Connection Reader:

This is the second issue of the quarterly *InterConnection*, designed to ensure that you continue to receive important justice news throughout the year. In this issue you will find multiple issue updates, addressing immigration reform and other legislative topics.

This has been a momentous - and yes, historic - year for NETWORK, and we are grateful that you are part of it. The healthcare reform vote has created an unprecedented level of media interest in our organization, and we've heard from many in DC and elsewhere who are grateful for NETWORK's help in getting the bill passed. Unfortunately, as our voice and influence strengthen, our finances grow more precarious. Will you help us? You can go to our homepage (www.networklobby.org) for more information.

Peace,
Stephanie Niedringhaus, NETWORK Communications Coordinator

P.S. We invite you to send us your comments. You can either hit "reply" to this message or send them directly to connection@networklobby.org. Thank you!

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educates, organizes,
and lobbies
for economic and
social transformation.

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Senate Immigration Reform Proposal Needs Work

Senate Democrats' new proposal for immigration reform, "***Real Enforcement with Practical Answers for Immigration Reform***" (***REPAIR***), devotes disproportionate attention to securing the U.S.-Mexico border, apprehending undocumented individuals, and cracking down on illegal employment. As Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano attests, the U.S. has *already* invested billions of dollars in fencing, border patrol officers, customs officials, and surveillance technology, and met every security benchmark set by Congress. Senate Republicans claim that the president and his administration haven't shown enough leadership on this issue. At a recent briefing among senior Dept. of Homeland Security (DHS) officers, NETWORK staff and our Interfaith Immigration Coalition partners, DHS officials recounted multiple visits to both Capitol Hill and the White House-as well as hours spent discussing legislative language on family and visa provisions with Democrats AND Republicans-all in attempts to move this process forward.

And yet, our immigration system remains broken. Families are separated by years-long waiting lists, adults brought here as infants are denied access to higher education, and low-skilled workers lack the legal resources to resist exploitation.

The Senate proposal does take some steps towards comprehensively fixing our immigration system. It creates an earned pathway to citizenship for undocumented people, raises per-country family immigration limits, establishes a new class of visas for low-skilled workers, and expands educational opportunities for immigrant children.

NETWORK is pleased to see the inclusion of these reforms, but we are deeply concerned about the overwhelming emphasis on enforcement. When we have already invested so much money and effort on the border, "enforcement-first" sounds like the language of politics, not governance. This framework will only move beyond politics when concerned citizens reduce the rhetoric and articulate truly comprehensive solutions.

NETWORK encourages our members to engage others in understanding the diverse perspectives in the immigration debate by leading this workshop we created (<http://networklobby.org/nep/introimmigworkshop3-2010.htm>). You can also read the REPAIR proposal itself (<http://media.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/documents/REPAIRProposal.pdf>), as well as our complete analysis of it (<http://networklobby.org/issues/2009%20issue%20agenda/5-4-10bordersecurity.htm>).

Repairing the Safety Net

The American Jobs and Closing Tax Loopholes Act of 2010 (H.R. 4213) weaves repairs to the damaged safety net. Among the issues on which NETWORK continues to advocate are extensions of Unemployment Insurance and COBRA, the TANF Jobs Emergency Fund, Summer Jobs for Youth and FMAP, and funding for the National Housing Trust Fund. The bill is a joint resolution between the House and the Senate. (You can read the bill here [http://waysandmeans.house.gov/media/pdf/111/HWC_711_xml.pdf], or a summary here [http://waysandmeans.house.gov/media/pdf/111/America_Jobs_Summary.pdf].)

The **National Housing Trust Fund** has its best chance of implementation since authorization in July 2008. H.R. 4213 would capitalize the fund to include \$1 billion for acquisition, construction and rehabilitation of rental units that can be afforded by people living in extreme poverty -- those at or below 30% of the median area income.

The bill also includes \$65 million for additional project-based vouchers, which will help make it possible for households to afford the newly available rental units.

NETWORK members and staff have advocated for the housing trust fund for more than years. Let's make it finally happen!

Also, here are some other important elements of H.R. 4213:

- Youth, ages 16 to 19, have the highest unemployment rate at 25%. This bill will also *support more than 300,000 jobs for young people ages 16 to 21*. Those who hope to attend college rely on summer jobs to help make it happen. Many families also rely on the summer jobs of teenagers to support household needs. Also, communities look forward to these jobs keeping youth engaged in productive activities throughout the summer months.
- The Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) is an increase of the federal portion of funding necessary to *continue employment of essential state personnel working with Medicaid recipients*. States and the federal government share responsibility for this, but with states' decreased revenues, and the vast increase in the number of households eligible for Medicaid, states cannot continue to afford the salaries of enough workers.
- Despite signs that the economy is recovering, joblessness remains a major problem for millions of families and individuals. Many jobless people are relying on unemployment benefits and would struggle if these benefits ended. Long-term unemployment is an increasing trend, with over 45% of people looking for jobs having been without work for more than six months, the highest percentage in more than six decades. For these long term unemployed individuals, the *extension of unemployment benefits* is vital.

- The extension of the *Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Emergency Fund* is vital for low-income families. By September of this year, 185,000 jobs will have been created under the TANF Emergency Contingency Fund, which provides reimbursement to states for increases in TANF-related expenditures in three specified areas, especially subsidized employment. The fund is providing fiscal relief to states, helping small businesses and local economies, and giving emergency assistance to families throughout the country. H.R. 4213 will continue this program through the end of September.

Financial Reform

The critical ***Restoring American Financial Stability (S. 3217)*** passed in the Senate on May 20. (Read the bill here: <http://www.opencongress.org/bill/111-s3217/text>) Although similar to the House-passed bill, significant differences will need to be resolved by a conference committee. Among differences is the placement of the Bureau of Consumer Protection within the Federal Reserve. The House favored an independent agency.

The bill contains protections for consumers and restrictions on banks. Payday lenders and auto dealers were not successful in their bids to be exempted from new regulations. The complexity of the bill demands extensive analysis, with opinions currently ranging from: "sweeping changes to the financial landscape" to "not much change, but better than the status quo."

NETWORK will continue to monitor financial stability work, pushing conferees to keep the bill as strong as the strongest elements in either of the bills. Wall Street lobbyists will continue to put millions of dollars into weakening the bill.

Federal Budget

Prospects for a Budget Resolution for FY2011 are dimming quickly. Budget committees in both the House and the Senate are seeking a vehicle in which to "deem" (set) a cap for discretionary spending. This will guide the appropriations committees as they disperse funds across government departments.

The cap on "non-security discretionary spending," requested by the president, was discussed in the most recent *Connection*. There will certainly be a cap, but debate continues on the level and range of programs that will be affected.

Child Nutrition

Reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Programs continues to wait on the Senate floor, with action most likely after the Memorial Day recess. Though Sen. Lincoln's (D-AR) bill addresses many pressing concerns such as simplified enrollment procedures, updated nutrition standards, and increased coverage, the bill still suffers from inadequate funding. The Senate Agricultural Committee has been able to provide only \$4.5 billion over the next 10 years for the program, which is unlikely to be sufficient for a significant improvement in nutritional quality.

Also, with rising unemployment rates, more families are expected to need federal assistance. Attention needs to be focused on providing sufficient coverage to the increasing number of children who are likely to become eligible for food assistance programs. NETWORK continues to work for sufficient funding and the passage of the reauthorization bill.

Trade Justice

NETWORK continues to advocate for support of the ***Trade, Reform, Accountability, Development, and Employment (TRADE) Act of 2009 (H.R.3012/S.2821)***, which lays out a

fair path forward for U.S. trade policy. (Read the bill text here: <http://capwiz.com/networklobby/issues/bills/?bill=13659426&size=full>) Introduced in the House by Rep. Mike Michaud (D-ME) and in the Senate by Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH), the TRADE Act would take major steps toward a more just trade model. By ensuring that our trade agreements live up to the high standards of the TRADE Act, we guarantee that our trade policies help workers, farmers, and impoverished people here and abroad.

As of this writing, the TRADE Act has 142 co-sponsors in the House and 7 in the Senate. This represents an important achievement, as a large number of lawmakers have spoken up to demand a new way forward on trade.

NETWORK's ministry of justice, including this Legislative Update, is funded through the generosity of our members. To **donate to NETWORK or become a NETWORK member**:
www.networklobby.org/development/join/index.html

Thank you for your activism, your prayers, your financial support and your solidarity with our mission of economic and social transformation.

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