



# SHEPHERDS SPEAK

## VOICES THAT CHALLENGE

Volume 3 Issue 3

THE NATIONAL ADVOCACY CENTER SISTERS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

December 2004

### FROM THE NATIONAL COORDINATOR THE NEXT FOUR YEARS



Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador prayed, *“It helps, now and then, to step back and take the long view. The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is beyond our vision.”*

The Archbishop reminds us that the Kingdom is always beyond us. We can work hard trying in a frenzy to touch all the bases. Romero says that there is a freedom that comes from realizing that we are not God and that God will take care of us.

The American people have decided which direction the country will travel over the next four years. As Good Shepherd people of faith, we will try to call those in power to consider those who have no power. We will continue to advocate for justice for all of God’s people through the lens of Catholic Social Teaching and our Good Shepherd values of charity,



reconciliation and hope.

We are more convinced than ever that the value of the human person must be a value considered when our government writes any legislation, be it domestic or international.

Archbishop Romero concludes his prayer with, *“We may never see the end results..., we are workers, not master builders, ministers not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own. Amen.”*

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### Welcome Tim Huegerich 2004-05 GS Volunteer

In September we welcomed a new College London Good Shepherd Volunteer to be Education Specialist at the National Advocacy Center.

Tim Huegerich is a native of St. Louis, Missouri. He graduated from St. Louis University High School and went on to study at Rice University in Houston, Texas. Tim also spent a year studying in England at University



College London. Tim brings many skills to his assignment at the National Advocacy Center, but he mostly brings a passion for advocacy. Some of you may have seen his work already on the website: [www.gsadvocacy.org](http://www.gsadvocacy.org) or his work on the 2005 priorities. We are happy to say, “welcome aboard Tim.”

# NAC Legislative Priorities for 2005

In October, the National Advocacy Center sent a survey to Good Shepherd communities and agencies in order to help shape our legislative agenda for 2005. We received 71 responses for an 88% response rate. From the responses a list of priorities was developed by NAC staff, recommended to the NAC Advisory Board, and approved at the November Advisory Board meeting.

**Level One** issues are the highest priority and require NAC to take a leading role through proactive and intensive advocacy, lobbying and research.

**Level Two** issues are priorities that require monitoring, some joint lobbying with coalition partners, and reactive strategies, such as letters and alerts.

**Level Three** issues are ones that NAC will monitor and address through work with coalitions and occasional alerts.

## Level One

### Increase Access to Healthcare

- Covering the Uninsured

Maintain/Improve Medicaid/SCHIP and support legislation to increase access to quality, affordable health insurance coverage.

- Improving Mental Healthcare

Support legislation to provide mental health/substance abuse treatment parity and promote greater funding for and access to mental health services.

### Enhance Social Investment

- Promoting Budget Fairness

Support balanced tax/spending policies and advocate for adequate resources for critical social services.

- Preserving and Improving the Social Safety Net

Continue work on the reauthorizations of TANF, WIA, and Head Start. Advocate for improvements in child welfare services and increased access to affordable housing.

## Level Two

### Promote Human and Economic Security

- Domestic Violence

Increase funding and strengthen supports and protections for domestic violence programs and in-



crease outreach and education within government programs about domestic violence.

- Human Trafficking

Support improvements to the Trafficking Victims Protection Act during its reauthorization and monitor enforcement of the legislation. Continue advocacy for increased education about the issue among government agencies and programs.

- Living Wage

Support legislation to increase the minimum wage as a step toward a living wage.

## Level Three

### Foster Reconciliation Nationally and Globally

- Immigration

Support legislation to lift restrictions on lawfully present immigrants' receipt of federal benefits and support immigration reforms to help undocumented workers and students adjust to legal status.

- Peace Initiatives

Oppose excessive military spending and militarism, support legislation to establish a federal Department of Peace and advocate peaceful conflict resolution.

- Global Economic Justice

Monitor funding and legislation for foreign aid and global health and support fair trade initiatives and responsible international development.

## Legislative Wrap-up

### A Year of Unfinished Business

As election politics dominated congressional activity, little was accomplished on NAC priorities in 2004. The budget process stalled early in the year, highlighting sharp divisions over priorities. However, tax cuts continued to take precedence over needed investments in critical social services. Several important reauthorizations, including Head Start and the Workforce investment Act, were sidelined and bipartisan immigration proposals were never brought to the floor for debate.

On the positive side, momentum continued to build in support of a National Housing Trust Fund (NHTF). The NHTF bill gained 214 co-sponsors and an effort was undertaken to bring the bill to the floor through a discharge petition that was signed by over 175 Representatives. Advocates were also able to fight off attempts to change budget rules in ways that would have done significant harm to human needs programs. In addition, although a final TANF reauthorization was not completed, advocates cheered a strong vote in the Senate (78-20) to increase child care funding by \$6 billion.

### The Final Budget

On November 20<sup>th</sup>, Congress completed most of its work on the budget for fiscal year 2005 when it passed a massive “omnibus” spending bill. The \$388.4 billion bill rolled together nine appropriations bills that Congress had yet to pass and included funding for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Justice, and several others. On the whole, human needs programs fared poorly as Congress struggled to stay within a tight spending cap agreed to by the President and Republican lawmakers earlier this year. Many programs were cut for the third year in a row and all programs outside of homeland security and defense were subject to an across-the-board .8% cut. While some lawmakers may argue that the cuts are relatively small, they mean real reductions in services to needy families throughout

the country.

### A Note on Section 8

The final spending bill did not include the cuts to the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program proposed by the President. It provided funding sufficient for maintaining current vouchers. However, the number of vouchers in use has decreased by 3% over the past year because of rules changes made by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The spending bill does not correct these changes, rather, it includes additional language that advocates fear would allow HUD to decrease the value and restrict the use of vouchers – leading to the possibility additional cuts in the future.

### Yet Another TANF Extension

Rather than completing work on a full reauthorization of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program this year, Congress temporarily extended the current program again. This extension, the 8<sup>th</sup> since 2002, passed both the House and Senate in September and runs through March 30, 2005. It will allow states to continue operating their programs under the provisions in current law, but leaves the task of reauthorization to the next Congress.

### Looking Ahead

The legislative outlook for 2005 offers a lot of challenges. Of these, the budget will likely be the most critical because the priorities it establishes serve as a framework for what Congress is able to do. Budget deficits will continue to elicit calls for spending cuts and many controversial proposals to place limits on a variety of programs, especially Medicaid, will likely resurface. In addition, tax and Social Security reform threaten to add to budgetary woes. Within this context, it will be more important than ever to hold up the vision of the common good and lift up the human faces and stories impacted by budget and legislative decisions. This is what the National Advocacy Center hopes to do



## Focus on Immigration New American Opportunity Campaign

This Fall the National Advocacy Center Staff was fortunate to participate in a lobby day sponsored by New American Opportunity Campaign (NAOC). The NAOC is a broad coalition of immigrant advocacy, grassroots, religious and labor organizations across the United States that have combined their efforts for greater effectiveness on behalf of new immigrants.

Advocates spoke in favor of legislation that would benefit immigrants and those seeking documentation after long term residence in the United States.

We hoped to build support for the Agricultural Job, Opportunity, Benefits and Security Act (AgJOBS), and the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM Act), Safe, Orderly, Legal Visas and Enforcement Act (SOLVE Act), and Civil Liberties restoration Act (CLRA).



*Our delegation with Rep. Martin Sabo, D-MN*

We spoke out against the Clear Law Enforcement for Criminal Alien Removal Act (CLEAR Act).

The lobby day was the culmination of a National Week of Action which sponsored many local activities across the country. There were marches to state capitols, immigrant workers' freedom rides, and prayer services.

Hundreds of young people who had been brought to this country by their parents when they were very young entered into a two week fast in order to bring the DREAM Act to a vote. These young people have grown up in the

U.S. and have been educated in our public schools. In many states there are no provisions for these students to attend colleges and universities as state residents, and qualify for resources that will help them finance their education. The DREAM Act will address this problem.

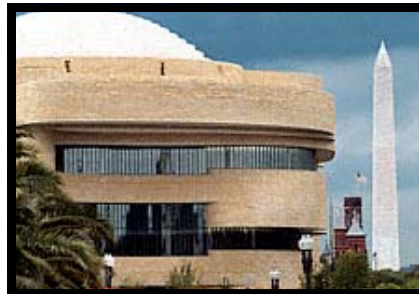
## NATIVE AMERICANS PARADE AS ...

The New Americans Opportunity Campaign lobby day took place on the same day as the opening of the Museum of the American Indian. The symbolism of the Native People welcoming the new immigrants was hard to miss.



28,000 Native Americans formed a procession

to mark the opening of the National Museum of the American Indian.



These are some of the scenes that were taking place as we visited the Minnesota Representatives with Zoe Massaquoi.

## Meet Zoe Massaquoi

Zoe Massaquoi escaped execution because she went to gather food for her family. When she returned she found that the Liberian rebels had nearly wiped out all the members of her family. Her father was executed in 1990.

Zoe was forced to take a job with the Taylor Government, and was blacklisted when she refused to assume another position with the government.

Mrs. Massaquoi took her two remaining daughters, a two year old and an 18 year old to a camp in Ivory Coast.

May 18, 1999 Zoe came to the U.S. and immediately applied for "Refugee Status" which she was granted after much advocacy and endless paperwork.

Then more problems, war broke out in Ivory Coast and Zoe became frantic for her children. Bishop

Craig Johnson, Minneapolis Area Synod, who along with the late Senator Paul Wellstone had helped Zoe gain refugee status, helped facilitate the move of her children from Ivory Coast to Ghana.

Zoe was in this country when terrorist struck on September 11, 2001. That day spread fear and terror across the U.S. and virtually closed all legal immigration into the country.

It was with a broken heart that Zoe was visiting the Minnesota representatives lobbying for the Safe, Orderly, Legal Visas and Enforcement Act (SOLVE

Act). This bill would keep families together by reducing backlogs in the family preference system by lowering income requirements for the affidavit of support. It would shorten the wait and enable families to heal and begin a new life together where they can live in peace.



*Zoe Massaquoi, a refugee from Liberia*

## ... NEW AMERICANS SEEK JUSTICE



Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell, R-CO (*pictured above - left*) sponsored legislation for the museum when he was a congressman. Sen. Campbell was one of the parade leaders.

It was a glorious day for the opening of the museum and the beginning of an entire week of celebration for Native Americans from throughout the Western Hemisphere.



It is important for us to remember especially now that anti-immigrant sentiments are so high that everyone who is not a member of one of the Native American Groups are voluntary or involuntary immigrants to the United States.

In the next Congress there will be debate over immigration reforms. We hope that reducing family backlogs and legalization of long term undocumented residents with a path to citizenship can be accomplished.

# SOA/WHINSEC Annual Vigil

On the weekend before Thanksgiving, I traveled with nine other Good Shepherd Volunteers to participate in the annual vigil in opposition to the school for training Latin American soldiers in Ft. Benning, Georgia. Widely known as the School of the Americas (SOA), it was renamed in 2001 the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC). Recently declassified training manuals recommend blackmail, executions, and torture to suppress democratic political dissidents. Graduates of the school have been responsible for many human rights abuses, including the murder of several Catholic bishops, priests, and churchwomen. Unfortunately, the recent name change was not accompanied with meaningful reform, and it was found earlier this year that students with well-documented histories of human rights abuses were trained at WHINSEC in 2002 and 2003.



*“Presenté”*

Although the van I was riding in to Georgia got a flat tire in South Carolina, a very helpful man stopped and provided the tools we needed to get back on the road quickly. We arrived Saturday evening just in time for the Ignatian Family Mass, a lively and inspiring celebration of the lives lost to graduates of the SOA, of God’s promise to hear

their cries, and of our collective commitment to work for justice and reconciliation.

The next day, we joined around 16,000 others gathered at Ft. Benning for the vigil. We all processed toward the perimeter of the school, each person carrying a cross or other symbol with the name of an SOA victim on it to place at the gate. As we walked, the names and ages of each known SOA victim were sung; and after each one, we all lifted our crosses and sang back “Presenté” in an act of defiant remembrance and hope. The mood was somber, but our evident mutual support for each other was heartening.



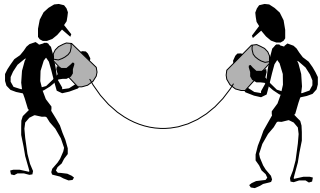
*GS Volunteers: Megan, Elisa, Tim*

Hearing the individual names of victims and realizing that many of their ages were close to my own made the tragedy of SOA violence startlingly real to me. The experience left me committed to actively advocate however I can for the closure and investigation of the SOA/WHINSEC. It was within a single vote of being closed in 1999, and Rep. McGovern (D-MA) has promised there will be a new vote on closing WHINSEC for investigation next year.

*“We are not allowed to kill innocent people.  
We are not allowed to be complicit in murder.  
We are not allowed to be silent while preparations for mass murder proceed in our name, with our money, secretly.”*

*Daniel Berrigan, SJ*

# Communications Improvements



Over the past year the National Advocacy Center has invested a lot of time in developing and improving our communications tools to provide more information on advocacy issues

to the Good Shepherd community and to make it easier to contact members of Congress.

## CongressWeb and E-mail Action Alerts

At the beginning of the year we introduced a new web action tool, CongressWeb, which allows us to post sample letters that Good Shepherd Advocates can edit and send to their Senators and Representatives. This web tool compliments our weekly e-mail action alerts by allowing advocates a quick and hopefully easy way to send a message to Congress. Sample letters are provided on the site for advocates to edit and send or individuals can compose their own messages.

The address for the web action tool is: <http://www.congressweb.com/cweb4/index.cfm?orgcode=GSNAC> or you can simply click on the "Take Action Now" link on the homepage of our website.

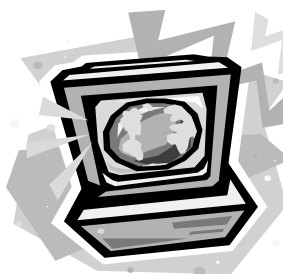


If you do not receive our weekly e-mail alerts and would like to do so or know of someone else who would, please e-mail the National Advocacy Center at [info@gsadvocacy.org](mailto:info@gsadvocacy.org) and list

the e-mail address that you would like to have added.

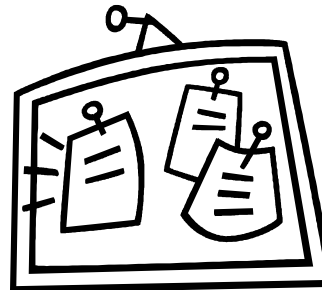
## An Improved Website

In the spring the National Advocacy Center rolled out a new website (<http://www.gsadvocacy.org>) and we have continued to add information to it throughout the year with much help from our Good Shepherd Volunteers Sara Schell and Tim Huegerich. Weekly action



alerts are posted on the website as well as links to more background information on the issues. In addition, a new "links" page allows website visitors to connect to many of our coalition partners. During the late summer a collection of voter education resources to provide guidance during the election was added to the site. In addition, updates on NAC issues are added as more information becomes available.

## Stories/Comments Wanted



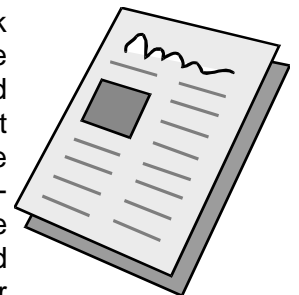
Recently, a new area was added to the website to encourage advocates to share information about the impact of programs and policies at the local level, stories about clients or needs that National Advocacy Center staff

can then share with members of Congress, and additional concerns.

A simple submission form on the website now allows advocates to send an e-mail directly to staff. Those who wish can have their stories/comments posted the NAC website. These comments will help us articulate better the real life needs behind the policy recommendations we make.

## The Newsletter

Finally, we continue to work to make this newsletter more accessible. It is now posted on our website as soon as it is published and it can be sent via e-mail (as a PDF attachment) as well. Please feel free to make copies and share with others in your community or agency. Also, if you know of someone who would like to be added to our newsletter mailing list (either "snail" mail or e-mail), please contact Marilyn Riffkin at [mrifkin@gsadvocacy.org](mailto:mrifkin@gsadvocacy.org) or 301-622-6838.





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***“Charity and Justice bind us to each other.”***

St. Mary Euphrasia (Foundress, Sisters of the Good Shepherd)

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## Good Shepherd Volunteer Reflections

By Tim Huegerich

I am so glad to have this chance to share how rewarding my first months at the National Advocacy Center have been. A year ago, I was just beginning to move past my despair at the direction of our nation and begin to believe that I could play a part in reshaping our government to better represent Americans who want peace and who long for the voices of marginalized people to be heard.

From my first day here, which began with a spirit-filled prayer service led by Sr. Gayle and continued with Alison's patient introduction to lobbying, my hopes have been confirmed and strengthened. Attending the meetings of our coalitions has further opened my eyes to the wonderful array of people and organizations speaking up for underrepresented women and families.

Perhaps most encouraging of all have been my own new experiences of participating in our gov-

ernment. I was rather nervous the first time I was asked to call the offices of US Senators, but after a few calls, I felt more comfortable and very grateful to be able to communicate so directly with them and even have detailed discussions with some staff members. I am also happy to report that I have seen again and again that members of Congress really pay attention to the phone calls and emails they receive—when they receive enough of them! My experience visiting Congressional offices was even more empowering. Busy members of Congress and their staff make time to meet with constituents, and they have been known to actually change their views when presented with compelling information and personal witnesses.

Even after I leave Washington there will be no good excuse not to schedule a visit when I have important concerns to share, especially since I have learned that members of Congress have local offices in their home districts.