

2010 Questions and Answers for the Candidates

Developed by the Friends Committee on National Legislation

Find details at <http://www.fcnl.org/q&a2010>

Introduction: Much of the debate in this presidential election season has centered on military strategies to resolve conflicts: continued fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, bombing Iran, and expanding the "war on terrorism."

You can help change the debate in this election. Challenge candidates for Congress in your area (including incumbents) to answer specific questions about how they will work to eliminate deadly weapons, conserve energy, provide health care to children in our communities, and promote diplomacy to prevent wars.

Don't miss this opportunity to speak your mind!

The following questions can help you start this process. We encourage you to engage in open and constructive dialogue with the candidates for the 2008 elections. Put up a War Is Not the Answer sign at your home or in your community and write letters to the candidates. Or better yet organize a letter to the candidates from your local meeting, church, or community group. Pencil in a few events where you can meet your candidates face to face—a town hall meeting, a shopping mall meet-and-greet, or an in-home visit with a few potential supporters. Or invite the candidates to come and speak with you.

Afghanistan: A Strategy to End the War

Congress continues to vote more money for war in Afghanistan without addressing the failure of that U.S. strategy to bring peace and security to that country and the region. President Obama has said he would begin to transfer U.S. forces out of Afghanistan in July 2011. Will you support legislation to begin a withdrawal no later than this date and to negotiate a timetable for withdrawal with the Afghan government?

FCNL's view: In 2010, the debate on Afghanistan in Congress tends to break down between "out now" and "keep fighting." The debate in Congress should be about the strategy that will end the fighting, bring U.S. troops home, and support efforts by the Afghan people to rebuild their country.

Time to Invest in Peace

In 2009, 33% of my tax dollars went to the military. Just 1% was spent on tools to help prevent war: diplomacy, development, and international cooperation. The U.S. needs civilian experts and readily available funds to help prevent, not just fight, wars. Will you support fully funding the State Department's new Civilian Response Corps, as well as the President's \$100 million request for a Complex Crises Fund to help prevent crises?

FCNL's view: FCNL's view: President Obama, Secretary of Defense Gates, and bipartisan congressional leaders agree that the United States needs more than just military might to build security in today's world. Congress has yet to invest adequately in the civilian tools of diplomacy, development, and international cooperation. For example, the Civilian Response Corps -- a new corps of experts from civilian agencies who can help prevent and rebuild after wars - continues to be underfunded.

Broken Bookkeeping – Time to Audit the Pentagon

Every major federal agency, except the Pentagon, is required to account for what it spends each year. The Pentagon has acknowledged that its financial books do not conform to accounting standards. Will you publicly endorse the call for the Pentagon to be subject to annual audits and support legislation that would require the Pentagon's books to be audited?

FCNL's view: As Defense Industry Daily noted in 2009, "It's not that the US Department of Defense fails audits. The problem is more fundamental: it is not currently possible to audit it, and any comprehensive audit would be a first-ever event in modern times." The Pentagon spent 33 cents of every tax dollar you paid in 2009. It should be required to account for that money like everyone else.

Fix the Broken Immigration System

The U.S. immigration system is broken. For more than 15 years, Congress has failed to pass comprehensive legislation to reform the system. If you are elected, will you cosponsor or endorse Rep. Luis Gutierrez's legislation (H.R. 4321) that promotes family unity, brings undocumented immigrants out of the shadows, and upholds immigrants' human and civil rights?

FCNL's view: Few people dispute that the U.S. immigration system is broken and inhumane, but many of the solutions offered focus on tighter controls on the border and more law enforcement rather than changing the current system. Instead of focusing on law enforcement, Congress should focus on fixing the broken immigration system to meet the needs of the United States in the 21st century.

Reduce Risk of Nuclear Weapons

Do you support the call from former Secretaries of State Henry Kissinger and George Shultz, former Sen. Sam Nunn, and former Defense Secretary William Perry for the United States to make a priority of pursuing "a world free of nuclear weapons?" If you are in the Senate when the new START treaty with Russia and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) are brought to a vote, will you vote for ratification?

FCNL's view: For the first time in decades, leading opinion makers in both major political parties recognize the nuclear weapons don't assure U.S. security. In the next two years, the Senate will have an opportunity to ratify the new START treaty with Russia and the CTBT. Ratification requires 67 votes.

Cut Greenhouse Gas Pollution

Global warming threatens the survival of the planet as we know it. Working together, the United States and other nations have the resources to address global warming by creating a new green global economy. Will you cosponsor bipartisan legislation introduced by Senators Maria Cantwell and Susan Collins that would provide simple, fair and effective means to reduce greenhouse gas pollution, or support similar legislation in the House?

FCNL's view: If the international community does not act now to mitigate global warming and dramatically diminish the human contribution to it, the human species could face catastrophic global change that would affect all life on Earth. The cap and trade legislation passed by the House in 2009 and similar legislation debated in the Senate did not take us in the right direction. The CLEAR Act (S. 2877) is the kind of legislation that should.

Honor the Promises for Native Americans

Indian Country is experiencing a public safety crisis. Will you cosponsor or endorse the Tribal Law and Order Act (S. 797 and H.R. 1924) to increase communication and cooperation between federal, state, local and tribal authorities; increase funding, training and authority of tribal governments and law enforcement agencies; and take steps to reduce violent crime and violence against women?

FCNL's view: Native Americans are addressing problems on Indian reservations. Yet a deficient justice system, insufficient funding and support from the federal government, and high crime rates and high rates of domestic and sexual violence are factors which contribute to a sense of lawlessness on some reservations. Congress should act to address these problems.

The Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) is a Quaker lobby in the public interest. FCNL is the oldest registered religious lobby in Washington. FCNL staff and volunteers work with a nationwide network of tens of thousands of people from many different races, religions, and cultures to advocate for social and economic justice, peace, and protection of the earth. Our mission statement reads:

We seek a world free of war and the threat of war

We seek a society with equity and justice for all

*We seek a community where every person's
potential may be fulfilled*

We seek an earth restored.

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