



*“The witness of this church in society flows from its identity as a community that lives from and for the Gospel. Faith is active in love; love calls for justice in the relationships and structures of society. It is in grateful response to God’s grace in Jesus Christ that this church carries out its responsibility for the well-being of society and the environment.”*

- ELCA social statement *The Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective*, pp. 1-2.

As Christians, our cares, concerns and commitments run deep and wide. We advocate to end world hunger and stand up for policies that create opportunities to overcome poverty, foster peace and human dignity, preserve God’s creation, advance racial and gender justice, and promote good order in public life. ELCA Witness in Society staff advocate by building relationships with policymakers, promoting legislation, taking joint action with values-aligned partners, providing input to federal agencies and much more. Shaped by ELCA social teaching and the experiences of our congregations, ministries and partners, the following are our federal advocacy priorities for 2024.



## SPECIAL NOTES

Certain federal policy considerations defy categories such as domestic or international, intersecting with multiple areas of concern for Lutherans and impacting our lives and the lives of our neighbors near and far.

• **FARM BILL:** The Farm Bill is such a category-defying piece of legislation, and the farm bill reauthorization process is now actively underway. This is an opportunity to

safeguard the foundations of our food systems — from the well-being of farm owners and farm workers to the farming methods that ensure the health and sustainability of the land, people, flora and fauna, as well as to the food resources distributed locally and internationally to fight hunger.

- The ELCA urges Congress to pass a Farm Bill reauthorization that promotes: food for hungry neighbors at home and abroad, healthy rural and farming communities, inclusion of people of all backgrounds, and creation care to feed future generations.
- The ELCA Witness in Society staff will advocate to reauthorize the Farm Bill in 2024 – recognizing the opportunity to reduce hunger and poverty in the United States and around the world, promote food sovereignty on tribal lands and encourage sustainable stewardship of our resources.
- **ELCA-WIDE STRATEGIES:** Certain strategies and declarations of the ELCA also call for action in multiple categories and across multiple ELCA programs beyond advocacy. Intersections with ELCA advocacy include AMMPARO, the Indigenous Advocacy Team, and Sumud.

*“God who ‘executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry’ (Psalm 146:7) is revealed in Jesus, whose mission was ‘to bring good news to the poor ... release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor’ (Luke 4: 18-19).”*

- ELCA social statement *Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All*, p. 2



## DOMESTIC

- **POVERTY:** Promote legislation to reduce poverty and unjust economic disparities particularly through the federal budget and tax code, as well as programs such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Fight hunger by protecting and adequately funding food security, strengthening child nutrition programs, and improving administrative efficiency in Department of Agriculture programs.
- **HEALTH CARE:** Help assure access to affordable, quality health care and expand federal resources to help address HIV/AIDS. Work to close racial, gender and economic disparities in health outcomes.

## 2024 ELCA FEDERAL POLICY PRIORITIES

- **HOUSING:** Work to reduce homelessness and homeownership disparities by expanding housing affordability, sharing innovative housing solutions from the experiences of faith-based ministries, increasing access to equal housing opportunities, and addressing existing patterns of segregation.
- **DISASTER RESPONSE:** Improve and make permanent federal programs that manage community rebuilding after natural disasters and uplift recommendations of impacted churches and ELCA ministries in public policy consideration.
- **HISTORIC INJUSTICES:** Recognize, examine and begin to address historic injustices such as the legacy of Indian boarding schools; advance policy that supports full inclusion of LGBTQ people in civic life; support the commission for the study of reparation proposals for African Americans.
- **CRIMINAL JUSTICE:** Promote criminal justice and policing reforms, continue to advance bipartisan bills to reduce mass incarceration, and address systemic racial bias in state and federal incarceration systems.
- **GENDER JUSTICE:** Monitor and support legislation and discourse that advances gender justice and raises awareness of gender-based crime, including domestic violence, human trafficking, sexual assault, and the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women.

**EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC LEGISLATION AND POLICY** — Making permanent the earned income tax credit (EITC). Increasing eligibility for the Child Tax Credit (CTC), which lifted millions of children out of poverty before its expiration in 2022, to the neediest families. Defending the low-income housing tax credit, the Housing First homeless model, SNAP benefits in the Farm Bill, and funding for disaster response.



### INTERNATIONAL

- **HUMANITARIAN CONCERNS:** Ensure robust federal funding for programs that work to fight global hunger and poverty; enhance international food security programs, including the food and nutrition programs authorized in the Farm Bill. Promote efficient humanitarian relief, especially in response to natural disasters and conflicts.
- **GLOBAL HEALTH:** Advance global health programs to address pandemics, epidemics, and endemic diseases including HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.
- **GENDER JUSTICE:** Strengthen U.S. government engagement and investment in international gender equity and equality; work to prevent gender-based violence, promote girls' education, protect women and girls in humanitarian situations, and attend to their economic and health care needs.
- **PEACE BUILDING:** Urge investment in conflict prevention and peace-building programs that address causes of conflict before they occur, and promote nonmilitary solutions to conflicts. Ensure effective and just implementation of existing laws and protect the human rights of civilians and minority groups.

*“We also advocate an earthly peace that provides security from violence and aggression, seeks just order in place of tyranny or anarchy, checks unrestrained power, and defends and enhances the life of people who are poor and powerless.”*

- ELCA social statement *For Peace in God's World*, p. 7

**EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC LEGISLATION AND POLICY** — Reauthorizing the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and U.S. Farm Bill. Promoting faith voice engagement as countries experience conflict/wars.



### ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

- **RESILIENCE FUNDING:** Monitor and influence implementation of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), the largest investment in the nation's history for mitigating climate change, with emphasis on the influx of funding



## 2024 ELCA FEDERAL POLICY PRIORITIES

- for renewable energy and carbon reduction programs and protect these funds from being diverted elsewhere.
- **URGENT CLIMATE SOLUTIONS:** In this Kairos moment for the planet, urge passage of policy to further address climate change and to reflect urgency for mitigating impacts of environmental degradation, supporting adaptation measures and promoting resiliency in light of increased natural disasters.
  - **ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE:** Lift up the concern of environmental justice in all energy and environmental policy and highlight the disparate impact of pollution and climate change on low-income communities, ethnic minorities, developing nations and Indigenous lands.
  - **FEDERAL DISASTER POLICY:** Advocate for improvements to federal disaster policy to better equip communities to adapt to impacts of climate change and provide protection for survivors of conventional and unconventional disasters.

*“[A]s people of biblical faith, who live together in trust and hope, our primary motivation is the call to be God’s caregivers and to do justice.”*

- ELCA social statement *Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice* p. 8

**EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC LEGISLATION AND POLICY** — Advocating for passage of the Recovering America’s Wildlife Act. Offering input on the final form of permitting bills related to energy production. Supporting effective implementation of the IRA and reauthorization of the Farm Bill. Advocating for responsible investments of international climate financing to address our responsibility toward global climate justice.



### MIGRATION

- **HUMAN RIGHTS:** Promote respect for international principles defending the human rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers while seeking to ensure the immediate protection, safety and dignity of children, families and those who have come to the United States to seek protection from persecution.
- **JUST AND HUMANE POLICIES:** Seek just and humane immigration policies and legislation, including actions to strengthen and expand refugee resettlement and facilitate safe and orderly migration pathways.
- **LEGAL STATUS PATHWAYS:** Foster social integration and inclusion of immigrants in the United States by advocating to create pathways for members of our communities to apply for durable legal status in this country.
- **DRIVERS OF MIGRATION:** Address the drivers of migration pushing many to flee their communities — such as violence, persecution, lack of economic opportunity and environmental degradation — by calling for foreign assistance and policy interventions that allow our neighbors to live safe and sufficient lives.

*“In our own country, we support a generous policy of welcome for refugees and immigrants. We pledge to continue our church’s historic leadership in caring for refugees and immigrants.”*

- ELCA social statement *For Peace in God’s World*, pp. 20-21

**EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC LEGISLATION AND POLICY** — Advocating for passage of the Afghan Adjustment Act and the American Dream and Promise Act. Supporting legislation to protect vulnerable immigrant youth and asylum seekers. Promoting safe, orderly and regular migration throughout the Western Hemisphere with the administration.



### MIDDLE EAST

- **ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR:** Continue to call for a ceasefire in Gaza to prevent further loss of life; prioritize the protection of all civilians, including the securing of humanitarian aid into Gaza and the release of hostages; and urge



## 2024 ELCA FEDERAL POLICY PRIORITIES

- all parties to fully respect international humanitarian law.
- **HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS:** Challenge Israel’s increasingly militarized response to Palestinians living under the occupation, especially the policy of child detention. Seek to hold Israeli military forces accountable for human rights violations.
  - **SETTLEMENT EXPANSION:** Oppose settlement expansion in the Palestinian territory. Defend the human rights of Palestinians living in the occupied territory by pressuring the U.S. government to publicly oppose Israeli government practices such as home demolitions and property seizures.
  - **HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE:** Maintain U.S. humanitarian assistance levels for the Palestinian people, bilaterally and via the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

*“Neither inaction nor weak action is an option for the ELCA if it intends truly to accompany the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, the LWF Jerusalem program, and other partners in this time of urgent crisis and opportunity.”*

- “Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine,”  
Section IV, p. 54

**EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC LEGISLATION AND POLICY** — Advocating for sustained support for East Jerusalem hospitals, including Augusta Victoria Hospital. Urging legislation requiring accountability for Palestinian child detention and reports to Congress on human rights practices of governments receiving U.S. security assistance.



### CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

- **ELECTION YEAR:** Activate, energize and equip ELCA congregations, networks and members for active civic engagement during the 2024 election season in the United States and following with tools at the connecting point of living out our baptismal promises in our public lives.
- **AIM OF COMMON GOOD:** Share models for depolarizing exchange and engage in advocacy with this lens, and support Lutheran communities and individuals as they develop civic relationships that build trust amid our differences. Foster election engagement and healthy community conversations toward the common good.

**EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC LEGISLATION AND POLICY** — Advocating for bills such as the the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act which would modernize and revitalize the Voting Rights Act of 1965, strengthening legal protections against discriminatory voting policies and practices.

*“Some people object to the church involving itself in matters related to government, in ‘politics.’ Taking partisan stances is not the church’s role, but ‘politics’ has to do with negotiating how the benefits and burdens of living in a society are shared.”*

- ELCA social message “Government and Civic Engagement in the United States: Discipleship in a Democracy,” p. 2

### HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

Our ministry of advocacy is a public witness to God’s love made real for our neighbors, ourselves and all creation. In addition to activity in Washington, D.C., on federal advocacy priorities, this public witness is also organized by [ELCA-affiliated state public policy offices](#), through our [ELCA Corporate Social Responsibility program](#) and by [Lutheran Office for World Community representation to the United Nations](#). Central to all these efforts is the advocacy of members, congregations and synods.

Connect with the ELCA Advocacy Network for updates and invitations to action at [ELCA.org/advocacy/signup](https://elca.org/advocacy/signup). Find resources at [ELCA.org/resources/advocacy](https://elca.org/resources/advocacy) and engage with the community on social media [@ELCAadvocacy](#).

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