

# THE ADVOCATE

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## Special points of interest

- Candidates sign pledge on Darfur
- Tips for phone calls and letter-writing
- Nicholas Wolterstorff discusses his new book in Grand Rapids



## EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY

It might be in the latest email that arrives in your inbox, or maybe it's the screaming headline on a website you visit: Take Action! Take Action!

We here at the OSJ say those words an awful lot, don't we? There is a lot of opportunity to say, "take action!"

The food crisis, the violence in Darfur, the global AIDS epidemic – each day we are confronted with injustices new and old, and each day, we have chance to do something.

A lot of times, those actions are spiritual and personal. We ask for prayer and petition, or we ask that one examine his or her own actions and prejudices.

We also encourage regular charitable actions, such as giving money to support relief efforts for people who need immediate assistance.

But much of the time, our role is to encourage advocacy action in an effort to change the systems and structures that make people vulnerable to hunger and poverty.

One of the best ways to do that is to contact our legislators and let them know what's on our minds.

It can seem sort of anticlimactic to fill in your name and address on some pre-written form and click a button to send an email off to your senator. Will she read it? Will it matter?

Making a phone call, on the other hand, can seem scary. I can just call my Member of Parliament? Just like that? Doesn't he have something else to do? What do I say?

We thought it might be helpful to give a few tips for effective advocacy so that the next time a call to "take action!" moves you, you'll feel well equipped to do so.

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## NEWS BRIEFS—BETTER AID BILL NOW LAW

Speaking of saying thank you to policy makers, Canadians have an opportunity to do just that.

The process for the Better Aid Bill started three years ago, and though it had support in the House of Commons, the bill was stalled in Senate. Mobilization from the Make Poverty History campaign, Canada's anti-poverty movement, helped move the bill forward.

Last month the bill was passed and has become law. The bill advocates for 0.7% of the government's income to aid the world's poorest countries, and also increases aid accountability by requiring annual public reports that explain where the money is going, to whom, and how it is being used.

Make Poverty History has set up a way for you to say thank you to the people involved in moving this bill forward.

Visit: <http://www.makepovertyhistory.ca/en/betteraid/action/thank-you>

**MAKE POVERTY HISTORY**

HOME | THE ISSUES | TAKE ACTION | CONNECT AND SHARE

**The Better Aid bill has passed**

it's time to say 'Thank you'

**BETTER AID BILL BECOMES LAW - THANK YOU!**

The Better Aid Bill has become law, marking a huge improvement in the way our foreign aid is distributed. It's time to say "Thank You" to the politicians who made this happen.

Please send a "Thank You" to the leaders who made this happen

Thank You!

You may not agree with all of their policies, but this time, each of the politicians below deserve a big "Thank You" from Make Poverty History supporters.

Continued on page 2.



Office of Social Justice

# NEWS, CONT'D

## Candidates sign pledge on Darfur

John McCain, Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama have signed a statement of unity about the situation in Darfur, Sudan.

"Today," the statement reads, "we wish to make clear to the Sudanese government that on this moral issue of tremendous importance, there is no divide between us."

The statement condemns the Sudanese government's efforts to undermine the peace process and its involvement in enacting violence against its own people.

The senators urge that the Comprehensive Peace Agreement be fully implemented and end the statement with a warning:

'If peace and security for the people of Sudan are not in place when one of us is inaugurated as President on January 20, 2009, we pledge that the next Administration will pursue these goals with unstinting resolve.'

The full statement and more about Darfur can be found on [www.savedarfur.org](http://www.savedarfur.org)

# EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY, CONT'D

## Writing a Letter:

The advice on this one is clear: make it personal and direct. It's quality, not quantity that counts. Larry Hollar, a regional organizer for Bread for the World says that personal letters "have a freshness and reality your members of Congress won't be able to brush off as 'canned words'" like in a pre-written form.

An [interesting survey](#) of congressional staff people involved in constituency relations showed that while mass form emails are counted and considered by Congress members, it's the letters (email, handwritten, or typed) where a constituent clearly took the time to write, in their own words, about a specific policy piece that really make an impact.



These folks represent us, after all, and they do want to hear from us.

### Tips:

- **Be personal.** Why is this legislation or policy important to you? What connections can you make about why this affects you, your community, your world? Even if you're using a form letter for your guide, change parts of it to make it your own.
- **Be direct.** Staffers don't have time to wade through novels, so make your points and make them clear. Larry says: "Always be clear and targeted on what you're asking for. General messages to help hungry people are not as effective as asking for more specific action: 'Please cosponsor H.R. XXX or S. YYY. Please vote for the Jones amendment on the House floor on the foreign aid appropriations bill.' Keep focused on one subject and don't load up your letter or email with many unrelated issues."
- **Canadians** can send postal mail to Parliament or the Prime Minister for free, so don't worry if you can't find a stamp!

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## Making a Phone Call:



Making a call to your Congressperson or Member of Parliament's office might seem a bit intimidating, but don't sweat it. There are people stationed in the offices just to take your calls and make sure you get your message across. Often, it takes only a minute or two to get connected to your office and make your points.

### Tips:

- **You can look up phone numbers** at [www.parl.gc.ca](http://www.parl.gc.ca) (Canadian Parliament) or [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) and [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) (US Congress). If you say you want to leave a message on such-and-such bill, they will connect you to whomever the right person is. Again, state clearly what you want: "I would like the Senator to support bill such-and-such because of a, b, and c."
- **It's always a good idea** to know where your politicians stand on a policy before you call (or write.) If your policy-maker has taken a position you agree with, you can always contact them to say thank you. Larry says that "letting the member of Congress know you appreciate their action helps show you're aware what's happening on Capitol Hill, and helps build long term, positive relationships."
- **Still apprehensive?** [Check out this quick video](#) where our Congregational Justice Mobilizer, Kate Kooyman, shows how to call Congress by actually doing just that. Painless!

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So there you have it, a few tips for calling or writing Parliament and Congress. Of course, there are many other ways to take important advocacy and justice action, but it never hurts to cover the basics.

Why not test your new knowledge and compose a letter or make a phone call this week? You can visit the Action Center page on our website at [www.crcjustice.org](http://www.crcjustice.org) for some ideas, or visit the Committee for Contact with the Government at: <http://www.crcna.org/pages/ccg.cfm> (they have a nice new design!).

## WEBSITES AND RESOURCES

●We've created a simple resource for you, your family or friends to do something about the **current food crisis**.

The action steps include a charity response, a justice response and a worship response, so that you can engage in this issue more deeply.

Download the one-page, bi-national resource today: [www.crjjustice.org](http://www.crjjustice.org).

The Canadian Foodgrains Bank also has a handy resource with action suggestions [here](#).

●**Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ)** have launched a new campaign called Envisioning Canada without Poverty.

From the campaign: "In 1989, the House of Commons voted unanimously to end child poverty in Canada by 2000.

Twenty years later, one in ten Canadians still live in poverty. For these Canadians, poverty is about more than lack of income – it is also lack of access to well-being.

And that's not all: poverty undermines the dignity of humans created in the image of God. This is a significant public justice concern. It's a concern we can do something about.

A comprehensive anti-poverty strategy would make a significant difference in the lives of the millions of poor Canadians.

This poverty reduction strategy should include a vision with measurable targets and timelines, an action plan and a budget, mechanisms of accountability and poverty indicators to monitor progress."

You can learn more about CPJ's campaign, and how you can become involved at [www.cpj.ca](http://www.cpj.ca).

●We've heard some great things about a **film called Renewal**, a documentary which follows people of all faiths who care about the environment.

## ACTION OPPORTUNITIES

As the news reports the dire situation for many affected by **the world food crisis**, we can feel helpless to do anything about it. But the truth is that **our actions do make a difference**.

We've pulled together a short response piece that you can use on your own or with your family and asks you to engage in a charity, justice and worship response to the crisis. This tool is relevant for Canadians and Americans, so please, download it today: [www.crjjustice.org](http://www.crjjustice.org) (the link is on our homepage).



Save Darfur Canada is hoping to collect 300,000 postcards to present to the Canadian government when they return for their fall session. Each postcard represents one victim from Darfur. More information and where to get the postcards can be found at: [http://www.sdcanada.org/en/postcards/postcards\\_ordering.html](http://www.sdcanada.org/en/postcards/postcards_ordering.html)

The Mennonite Central Committee's Latin America and Women's Advocacy programs are sponsoring an immigration-related learning trip to Mexico especially for women.

For those of you interested in immigration, international affairs and U.S. policy, this is an excellent opportunity to explore these issues first-hand - together with women affected by them.

The learning tour is called **Women and Migration: Hope in the Midst of Violence** and will go from October 12-22, 2008. Registration deadline is July 15.

To learn more about the tour and what's involved, please contact Jared Hankee or Linda Gehman Peachey (717) 859-1151, (888) 563-4676, [jhankee@mcc.org](mailto:jhankee@mcc.org).



It explores rural communities, suburbs and urban centers, and looks at how Christians, Jews and Muslims alike are responding to environmental degradation from their spiritual viewpoints.

If you see it before we do, send us a review! DVDs are available for purchase at [www.renewalproject.net](http://www.renewalproject.net)

●Make sure you check out the latest issue of Partners, Diaconal Ministries Canada's newsletter, which has an article on **creation care, justice and churches** working together written by our own Karen Bokma.

[Access it here](#) or visit [www.diaconalministriescanada.com](http://www.diaconalministriescanada.com)

●You may also want to turn the dial to PBS at the end of this month for another documentary called **Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North**.

In this feature documentary, filmmaker Katrina Browne discovers that her New England ancestors were the **largest slave-trading family in U.S. history**.

She and nine cousins retrace the Triangle Trade and gain a powerful new perspective on the black/white divide.

The film premieres nationally on Tuesday, June 24 at 10pm (but check your local listings as time and dates may be different.

You can also go to [www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org) and put your zip into the TV Schedule box for the listings in your area.

## ADVOCATE CALENDAR

Sojourners is holding their annual gathering, **Pentecost 2008: Training for Change, June 13-15** in Washington D.C. This year focuses especially on equipping Christians to organize and advocate effectively. If you're nearby, [check it out](#).

**Bread for the World** is holding their **annual Lobby Day on June 17**. This year's focus is on the **Global Poverty Act**, which will commit the United States to help cut global poverty in half by 2015. This bill helps us get serious about creating an effective strategy to achieve a reduction in extreme global poverty.

**World Refugee Day is June 20**. The CRC has a long history with refugee issues and is engaged in refugee resettlement. Learn a bit more on [our website](#), and visit our partners at [Church World Service](#) (the CRC in the US works with CWS to resettle refugees in our church communities.) CWS has provided bulletin inserts and a worship resource for those who want to focus on refugees for the Sunday closest to World Refugee Day.

As part of the Envisioning Canada without Poverty campaign, **Citizens for Public Justice has embarked on a national tour**, hosting poverty reduction workshops in cities across the country. CPJ hopes these engaging and thought-provoking discussions will challenge participants to take action on poverty by engaging with their Members of Parliament. [Check out the dates](#) here and visit their site: [www.canadawithoutpoverty.ca](http://www.canadawithoutpoverty.ca) No registration required – simply come and join the conversation.

**Nicholas Wolterstorff** will be joining us in the CRC offices in Grand Rapids for a series of informal brown-bag discussions on his new book, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs*. You don't need to be an academic to get something out of these conversations, so if you're interested, please join us! Dr. Wolterstorff suggests that the most immediately relevant parts of the book would be: Introduction, chapters 2 through 5, and Epilogue. If more time is available, then we could go into chapters 14 through 16.

The series will take place on **Thursdays: June 19, 26, July 3, and 10 from noon-1pm** in the Michigan Room at 2850 Kalamazoo Ave. Reception will direct you to the right room. Bring your lunch, your book and your questions!

**The Association for a More Just Society (AJS)** invites you to the Doing Justice Locally and Globally conference on Saturday, June 28 from 1:30 - 5:00 p.m. at Church of the Servant in Grand Rapids. Presenters include Carlos Hernández, who has received death threats for his efforts on behalf of the poor; AJS president and Calvin College sociology prof. Dr. Kurt A. Ver Beek; Higher Grounds Trading Co.; Safe Haven Ministries; and AJS-supported justice workers in Honduras (via videoconference). Registration is \$5 ahead of time / \$10 at the door / free for [Justice Club](#) members.

AJS also invites you to join the **Just Run team** running for justice in the Reeds Lake Run on Saturday morning, and to the Celebration of Justice dinner at 5:30 p.m. on Saturday, June 28, also at COS.

For more information and to register, please visit [www.ajs-us.org/celebration](http://www.ajs-us.org/celebration)

## JUSTICE & WORSHIP

June 20<sup>th</sup> is the annual World Refugee Day. Many churches choose to recognize the plight of the refugee on the Sunday closest to this day.

Church World Service, the organization through whom the CRC in the US resettles refugees, creates worship materials each year to assist in a refugee focused service.

You can visit this page: <http://www.churchworldservice.org/Immigration/publications.html#wrd> to view the 2008 resources, or to check out material from previous years.

The link above also includes refugee stories, bible studies and other materials to help guide your church in its response to these vulnerable people.

Info and material for World Refugee Day from UNHCR Canada is [available here](#).

# OSJ

Office of Social Justice



Find us on the web:

[www.crcjustice.org](http://www.crcjustice.org)

[Justiceseekers.ning.com](http://Justiceseekers.ning.com)

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