

YWCA USA Bi-Weekly Policy Update

April 14, 2017

Members of Congress Head into Second Week of Recess Activities

Congress recessed on April 7th and we urge you to continue to take meetings and attend events in your communities! YWCAs have a prime opportunity to engage with your legislators while they are home in the district. Review the [April 2017 Recess Plan](#) for recommended outreach, including around the fiscal year 2017 and 2018 budget processes and the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

Additionally, we hope all YWCAs will participate in the Protect Our Care Coalitions' Day of Action on Wednesday, April 19th. Here's how you can participate:

- Turn out to town halls or other events: Find [town halls](#) that focus on members of congress - including with members as well as empty chair events.
- Keep up the calls: Legislators need to keep hearing from folks over the remainder of recess to #RejectRepeal and #ProtectOurCare. [Write](#) to your Member of Congress and urge them to defend the Affordable Care Act!
 - Thank those who have supported the ACA and make sure those who voted against it know how important its protections are for women and families in their districts!
 - Get members to recommit that they will not repeal the health care law and will not cut coverage, increase costs or eliminate basic services - like cancer screenings and prescriptions drugs.
 - Hold members who voted against the ACA or came out publicly in support of the American Health Care Act (AHCA) accountable. They need to hear directly from their constituents about what that means at public events, at press conferences or empty chairs where members are not holding events and through LTEs, calls, and social media.

Senate Confirms Judge Neil Gorsuch as Newest Supreme Court Justice

On April 7th, the Senate invoked the nuclear option to break the Democratic led filibuster of Judge Gorsuch and voted 54-45 to approve him as the newest Supreme Court Justice.

In mid-March, Judge Neil Gorsuch testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee as he was considered to fill the Supreme Court seat vacated by Justice Scalia following his death. After four days of testimony, YWCA USA's concerns about Judge Gorsuch's record with respect to women's rights, workplace fairness, and racial justice and civil rights were exacerbated rather than assuaged. Accordingly, following the hearing, YWCA USA released [a statement](#) formally opposing Judge Gorsuch's nomination to the Supreme Court and Interim CEO, Casey Harden, wrote [a letter](#) to the United States Senate expressing opposition to his nomination.

[In big win for Trump, Senate approves his conservative court pick](#) [Reuters]

[Neil M. Gorsuch sworn in as 113th Supreme Court justice](#) [The Washington Post]

House Education and Workforce Committee Move Forward Juvenile Justice Legislation

On April 4, the House Education and Workforce Committee approved H.R. 1809, the [Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2017](#), recently reintroduced by Reps. Jason Lewis (R-MN) and Bobby Scott (D-VA). The legislation, which passed the House and came close to passage in the Senate last Congress, reauthorizes the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP), which helps state and local leaders serve at-risk youth and juvenile offenders. The legislation would give states and localities the flexibility to deliver specific services to delinquent youth in their communities, help at-risk youth avoid the juvenile justice system by improving prevention services, and improve accountability and oversight throughout the juvenile justice system. The legislation is expected to move through the House swiftly, since it has bipartisan support and was close to passage last year. YWCA USA supports this legislation.

[House panel approves bills on juvenile justice, missing children](#) [The Hill]

Attorney General Sessions Orders Review of Justice Department Consent Decrees

On March 31, Attorney General Jeff Sessions issued a new directive for the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to review all existing and contemplated consent decrees, such as those that were put in place with law enforcement agencies in Seattle, Cleveland and Ferguson, Mo. These consent decrees were negotiated following investigations that revealed a pattern or practice of excessive police force in violation of the Constitution and federal law. Incidents in these cities included the shooting of 14-year-old Tamir Rice and 18-year-old Michael Brown.

These consent decrees—which are court-ordered agreements between DOJ and law enforcement agencies—initiate reforms of local policing practices to ensure fair policing and the rights of the community. Attorney General Sessions' memorandum appears to be the next step in President Trump's focus on "law and order" strategies that many fear will increase inequities within the federal criminal justice and law enforcement systems. YWCA USA Interim CEO, Casey Harden made a [statement](#) on this pull back of civil rights enforcement.

On April 3rd, DOJ filed a motion to postpone court proceedings on a consent decree negotiated by the City of Baltimore and the Obama administration to address unconstitutional law enforcement practices by the Baltimore police department. The Baltimore mayor and police chief were outspoken in their opposition to DOJ's motion, and later that week, a federal district court judge in Maryland denied the postponement request. In approving the consent decree, the judge noted, "The problems that necessitate this consent decree are urgent. The parties have agreed on a detailed and reasonable approach to solving them. Now, it is time to enter the decree and thereby require all involved to get to work on repairing the many fractures so poignantly revealed by the record."

[Sweeping Federal Review Could Affect Consent Decrees Nationwide](#) [The New York Times]

[Attorney General Review of DOJ Consent Decrees Threatens Youth of Color](#) [Center for Law and Social Policy]

[Federal judge approves Baltimore policing consent decree, denying Justice Department request for delay](#) [The Baltimore Sun]

Attorney General Sessions Orders Federal Prosecutors to Focus on Immigration Crimes

On April 11, Attorney General Sessions [announced](#) that the Trump Administration will begin requiring all federal prosecutors to prioritize federal cases related to immigration-specific offenses. The [memorandum](#) to federal prosecutors also encourages prosecutors to seek deportation orders against defendants in such cases whenever possible. Each prosecutor's office is also directed to designate a border security coordinator to investigate and prosecute immigration cases. This announcement is consistent with the provisions of previously-released Executive Orders and from a memorandum previously issued by the Department of Homeland Security. For previous YWCA USA statements on immigration enforcement, please see the [YWCA public releases page](#).

[Sessions Directs Prosecutors to Focus on Immigration Crimes](#) [Roll Call]

[Sessions tells prosecutors to bring more cases against those entering U.S. illegally](#) [The Washington Post]

YWCA USA Signs on to Letters on Mission Related Issues

Over the past 2 weeks, YWCA USA has signed on to the following [coalition letters](#):

Act4JJ Appropriations Letter (4/11)

Urging members of the Commerce Justice and Science Appropriations Subcommittee to secure the highest allocation possible to support juvenile justice programs that protect youth and promote safe communities.

NTF Letter Re: VAWA, VOCA, FVPSA Appropriations (4/5)

Urging appropriators to increase funding for federal programs that address domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking.

PFA Coalition Letter Re: Paycheck Fairness Act (4/3)

Urging members of Congress to co-sponsor and support the Paycheck Fairness Act

Women's Community Letter Against Gorsuch (3/31)

Opposing the nomination of Judge Neil Gorsuch to the United States Supreme Court.

National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy Letter (3/31)

Calling on House leaders to preserve funding for the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program and the Personal Responsibility Education Program.

Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship (3/31)

Opposing proposals that would weaken federal laws prohibiting 501(c)(3) organizations from endorsing, opposing, or contributing to political candidates.

Justice Roundtable Letter Re: DOJ Smart on Crime Initiative (3/30)

Urging Attorney General Sessions to maintain the Smart on Crime initiative within the DOJ.



NTF Letter Re: Immigration / Sanctuary City Policies (3/28)

Urging the House Judiciary Committee to affirm the intent and spirit of VAWA by supporting strong relationships between law enforcement and immigrant communities.

Stand Against Racism 2017: Two Weeks Away!

Don't forget to [register](#) your association for Stand Against Racism: Women of Color Leading Change, April 27-30, 2017! Please share the [invitation](#) for the YWCA Stand Against Racism National Day of Action Policy Briefing with any DC-based colleagues.

Sign up to receive YWCA USA Action Alerts

YWCA USA has launched its new action alert tool! [Sign up](#) here to make sure you receive all the latest calls to action on pressing public policy issues.

Don't Forget to Act!

Please see the Action Alerts in YWCA USA's new [Action Center](#) to encourage your legislators on many of our policy priorities! Action alerts are currently posted encouraging legislators to support the End Racial and Religious Profiling Act (ERRPA) and the FAMILY Act, and to protect access to quality, affordable health care.

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