From the Committee on Public Policy and Political Action
Karen Pataky, Chair

WNDC 2020
Developing our policy positions

The WNDC has historically created policy positions and position statements that the institution believes are important for achieving a more just and inclusive nation. Each PPC Task Force leads the process in developing the position statements, which represent policy goals and provide clear pathways for advocacy and action.

We are in the process of developing WNDC’s policy platform leading up to the 2020 election. Over the next few months we will circulate drafts of each Task Force’s policy positions in the Political Dispatch. We invite comments, edits, and input from the membership so that position statements are robust and comprehensive.

You can submit your comments to by emailing Karen Pataky, Chair, PPC, and the relevant Task Force Chair, or submitting comments online. This month, we have statements for the Health Policy Task Force and the War Fever Task Force along with other updates and perspectives. We look forward to hearing from you!

Karen Pataky, Chair, Public Policy and Political Action Committee

TASK FORCE REPORT:
Gun Violence Prevention

Important December Dates for Gun Violence Prevention

**MONDAY, DEC. 2, 7:30 AM**
Rally outside Supreme Court. Court hears oral arguments in NYC v Rifle & Pistol Association dealing with 2nd Amendment.

**TUESDAY & WEDNESDAY, DEC 3–4, 8:45 AM TO 3 PM; FREE**
5th Annual Gun Violence Prevention Meeting. Foundry United Methodist Church, 1500 16th St, NW

**WEDNESDAY, DEC. 4, 7–9 PM**
“VIGIL,” 7th Annual National Vigil for All Victims of Gun Violence, sponsored by Newtown Action Alliance & 85 other groups. St. Mark’s Episcopal, 301 A St, SE
Gun Violence In America

Over recent months, two states, Virginia and Wisconsin, held special sessions on gun violence. Virginia’s legislature (led by Republicans) adjourned after 90 minutes without taking up common-sense gun legislation. Their strategy was to block action by forming a commission to study the proposals. Wisconsin followed the same pattern and adjourned their session in 30 minutes without taking up gun safety measures. Voters in Virginia told their legislators what they thought about the results of the “special session.” Wisconsin will have its opportunity in 2020. Doing nothing about America’s gun violence crisis is simply unacceptable!

Stay Tuned for Regular Updates from Gun Violence Prevention Task Force

Keep your eyes on WNDC’s social media platforms—Twitter and Facebook—for fast-breaking news, upcoming events, and action alerts.

Ellen McGovern, Chair, Task Force on Gun Violence Prevention

No Longer a Crisis, but an Emergency

On November 6, The Washington Post announced a new report on what is happening to the earth’s climate. The findings are so dire that 11,258 scientists from 153 countries signed off on the report, published in the November 5 issue of the journal BioScience. Tellingly, two of the countries contributing to the report are Australia, now ravaged by unprecedented wildfires, and South Africa, where many parts of the continent are undergoing historic droughts. The report does not counsel despair, but urges immediate and large-scale action, including leaving fossil fuels in the ground and implementing “massive energy efficiency and conservation practices.” Another key recommendation is to immediately cut emissions of short-term pollutants such as methane and coal-produced soot. A summary of the report can be found online.

Meanwhile, our home-grown Nero is not just fiddling, but is eagerly fanning the flames. He and his enablers are cutting regulations that limit pollutants from coal-fired power plants, methane emissions from fracking, and greenhouse gas emissions from gasoline-powered vehicles, while pushing for increasing oil exploration and drilling in sensitive ecosystems. Forests are well-known carbon sinks, but this administration is promoting logging, especially in the Tongass temperate rain forest in Alaska. The Tongass—the American Amazon—has irreplaceable ecological and climactic benefits for the entire northern hemisphere.

In the most recent outrage (no surprise; it was first announced in early 2017), the administration has officially withdrawn the United States—the only country to do so—from the Paris Climate Agreements. Of some small comfort is that the withdrawal will take a year to finalize, which incidentally will coincide with the November elections. Between now and then, we must all push hard for the election of city, county, and state legislators and for the selection of government leaders who are advocates for and champions of a healthy climate and environment. And, we can band together to conserve energy, transition to 100% renewable energy sources, drive less, and lobby regulators and legislators, as well as business leaders, to see the climate emergency facing us and take bold action to counter it.

Want a livable earth? Vote Democratic!

Jean Stewart, Chair, Task Force on Earth and the Environment

References: Washington Post, Nov. 6, 2019, “More than 11,000 scientists around the globe declare a ‘climate emergency,’” page A3.
Positions on War Fever

The US government is now conducting counter-terror activities in 80 countries. We spend more than $1 trillion each year on national security and defense. Polls show that Americans are tired of our military involvement in Middle East wars, and the US Senate—in a bi-partisan vote—approved measures to block sales of weapons to Saudi Arabia. But the Senate was unable to get enough votes to override a pledged veto by President Trump, who has now dispatched an additional 1800 American troops to Saudi Arabia.

Therefore, we actively support ways to reduce the war fever that grips so many of our national leaders.

- Use diplomacy rather than boots and guns to resolve conflict. This means rebuilding our State Department and giving our diplomats the funding and standing they need to best represent US interests. Former defense Secretary Robert Gates—a Republican who served under President Obama—has said that we have more musicians in our military bands than diplomats in the State Department. Admiral Mike Mullen, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has said that “US foreign policy is still too dominated by the military, too dependent upon the generals and admirals who lead our major overseas commands.”
- Expose the waste in national security and defense spending, including the Pentagon budget and the vast overspending on nuclear weapons.
- Follow the US Constitution, which gives Congress—and only Congress—the authority to take the country to war, a provision that the Executive Branch has ignored in recent years and that Congress has allowed.
- Oppose the vested interests that produce and support endless wars.
- Demand that members of Congress take a stand on whether the US should go to war—before troops are sent abroad.
- Insist that government officials define what they mean when they declare that military force is needed because of threats to what they call our “national security.”
- End credit card wars. If there is a need to go to war, leaders must say how the war will be financed. In the past, the government has sold bonds or raised taxes to pay for war. But, recent wars have been financed with credit—money we borrow from China and other lenders and that our children and grandchildren will have to repay.
- Consider some form of national military or civil service for young people that offers college tuition assistance.
- Help return civics to the classroom so young people better understand how our government is supposed to work, based on the US Constitution, which gives Congress—rather than the President—the authority to take the country to war and send our sons and daughters into harm’s way and possible death in conflicts.
- Rethink America’s role in the World. We need a vigorous but civil debate to determine the best way forward from the Trump years of disruption and chaos so we can more effectively deal with the challenging new world of drones, cyber warfare, and surveillance that threatens our civil liberties.

Molly McCartney, Chair, War Fever Task Force
Positions on Healthcare

We believe that comprehensive health care is a basic human right. Every person has the right to receive the full range of science-based health care services regardless of race, sex, skin color, religion, gender identity, or the ability to pay. Health care must be universal and encompass all life stages from birth to death including prevention, diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation, and palliation.

Accordingly, we support:

- Providing full funding in all areas of Centers for Disease Control (CDC)–determined surveillance and treatment standards into all causes of morbidity and mortality, including workplace hazards, gun violence, and environmental toxins. All findings must be available to the public in a timely manner.
- Opposing all legislation that might enable any health care provider serving in any tax-funded facility to refuse care to any person for any reason.
- Expanding community-based “on site” medical services with multiple disciplines of health care providers so that no person needs to travel farther than 5 miles for assistance.
- Requiring every public school to be staffed with a registered nurse to evaluate and collaborate with appropriate medical and psychological service providers.
- Providing full federal funding for complete lifetime care for all veterans, their spouses, and their children through the Veterans’ Administration (VA)
- Mandating American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology (ACOG) standards of care for all women of reproductive age including the full range of pregnancy and birthing care, contraceptive choices, or termination of pregnancy as determined by the pregnant woman and her physician.
- Restoring Title X funding to Planned Parenthood and other women’s health care offices that adhere to ACOG standards.
- Requiring that staffing levels in medical offices, surgical centers, and hospitals be determined by physicians, nurses, and other licensed health care providers for maximum patient and medical personnel safety.
- Providing full funding for environmental infrastructure replacement and maintenance to guarantee clean, potable water for every person, all farm animals, and all crops.
- Ensuring decent housing that has comfortable temperature and is dry and free of dust, mold, vermin, lead, and foul or contaminated air.

Karen Pataky, Chair, Health Policy Task Force