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Winter 2018

Sanity Begins with a Ban on Assault Weapons

Unnecessary Tragedy Must Bring Police Reform

The tragic shooting of Andrew Finch resulted from bad procedure and flawed thinking within the Wichita Police Department (WPD). Police responded to what turned out to be a “swatting,” where anonymous callers report fake situations to motivate a huge police/SWAT presence to a random or selected address. Police arrived at the caller’s claim of “1033 W McCormick St” and were surprised when they were setting up and Andrew opened the inside door to see what was going on. He was unarmed at his home watching TV.

An officer shot Andrew through the screen door from 45 yards at a busy intersection only seconds after yelling two inaudible commands. Andrew could have been a hostage, or deaf. He died inside his house with an ambulance held back by frightened police. 911 operators were still on the phone call with the swatting caller for 16 minutes after Andrew was

shot. Police forced family members to walk out of the house over Andrew’s body. They treated

Andrew’s family like criminals, detained them for hours, and confiscated their cell phones and computers for days.



Community members gather for a vigil at the home of the Finch family.

Police neglected verification procedures and their own policies. Activists concerned about this and other WPD policies on lethal force are speaking at city council and meeting with Chief Ramsey to enact policy reforms, increase training and address cultural issues in the WPD.

Stop with the saber-rattling: Lobby to prevent war with North Korea

The Wichita Advocacy Team is nine Wichitans who were trained to lobby Senators Moran and Roberts, and Representative Estes. When the Wichita team was launched last year by the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL), there were 30 congressional district teams across the country working with FCNL lobbyists to fight wasteful Pentagon spending and redirect it to address human needs. Now there are teams in 80 congressional districts focusing on preventing war with North Korea.

Advocacy Teams build relationships with local congressional staff members by telling personal stories that relate to the lobbying goal, talk with policy staff in Washington, and finally meet with our senators and congressman. The Wichita Team has climbed half way up this ladder, having met with local office staff and by teleconference with two military budget policy staff members. We were surprised to learn that one of them is a member of a Quaker meeting.

Last year the team stressed the need for a first time ever audit of the Pentagon, a good way to approach Kansas office-holders who quickly agree that taxpayer money should not be wasted. Legislators responded by extracting a promise from the Pentagon to finish the audit by next fall. FCNL advocates for a right-sized Pentagon budget and increased discretionary spending for domestic programs including health and education.

Last month the team pivoted to learning about North Korea and how diplomacy could calm the saber-rattling by Donald Trump and Kim Jung Un. The Wichita Advocacy Team is currently securing another round of appointments with Moran, Roberts, and Estes’ local staff members, seeking connections with Wichita’s Korean community, and writing letters to regional newspaper editors. Creating trusting relationships takes time, but that’s often how minds are changed! If you are interested in this systematic, focused lobbying effort here in Wichita, contact Dorlan Bales at 200-6200 or dorlan@cox.net.

Free Speech Victory in Kansas has National Implications



We were glad to see the federal court rule against the foolish and dictatorial Kansas legislation that prohibits individuals, employees and

corporations from supporting the Palestinian struggle for human rights in Israel and Palestine through BDS --Boycott, Divestment & Sanctions.

The ACLU sued on behalf of Esther Koontz, member of the Mennonite Church USA, which in July voted to divest itself from American companies that

profit off of Israel’s occupation of the Palestinian territories. Koontz is a math curriculum coach from Wichita who was invited to coach teachers as part of the Kansas Department of Education’s Math and Science Partnerships program. However she would not promise not to boycott Israeli companies.

“You don’t need to share my beliefs or agree with my decisions to understand that this law violates my free speech rights. The state should not be telling people what causes they can or can’t support...” Since this ruling, the Massachusetts legislature decided not to move forward with a similar law limiting free speech. Other states with anti-BDS laws are watching this ruling.

Fearing the Future of Puerto Rico

I had the opportunity to work in Puerto Rico this past November and December, in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. As shocking as the devastating wind and flood damage, I was more impressed with the patience and resourcefulness of the Puerto Rican people that I met. Throughout my time in the north-central part of the island, I never felt endangered and was always welcomed. Strangers greeted each other on the streets and in restaurants, drivers cautiously navigated traffic intersections without operating stop lights, and people presented themselves with a sense of normalcy - despite the lack of electricity, internet or even running water, sometimes.

It was the damage to important infrastructure, like power, communications and water systems, which made Hurricane Maria a catastrophic event – and not just a disaster for the 3.4 million residents there. The physical damage caused by Irma and Maria is estimated to be \$94 billion.

The true costs of lost wages, economic opportunities, and stress caused by the catastrophe



are incalculable. Even before the storms hit the island, almost half of Puerto Rico's residents lived below the poverty line and the economy was

entrenched in a decade-long recession. In the last four months, an estimated 200,000 people have left the island to search for work and new life in the continental US – many of whom have the skills the island will need to recover.

An article in The Wall Street Journal article titled "Struggling to Fill Jobs, U.S. Employers Look to Storm-Battered Puerto Rico" revealed that many U.S. employers in need of both skilled and unskilled workers are actively recruiting Puerto Ricans. We can only hope that storm refugees will eventually be able to return to their *Island of Enchantment* and translate their new skills to a better life back home.

Michael Aumack

While Sedgwick County and Tonganoxie were celebrating the victory over Tyson, the chicken barons were sneaking around Topeka. Senate Bill 405 removes the protective distances required between their chicken factories and people's homes. This bill has already passed out of committee.

To keep abreast of legislative activities in Kansas, go to <https://www.loudlight.org> and click on the Kansas Legislature drop down.

Peace & Social Justice Education Fund 1407 N. Topeka Street Wichita, Kansas 67214

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Upcoming Events

Get the Big Money Out of Politics

Friday, February 23, Noon-1 pm

Broadway & Douglas (at Sen. Moran's office)

Criminal Justice Reform Panel

Saturday, February 24, 2:00 - 4:00 pm

McAdams Park Rec Center, E 16th N & Wabash (north end)

The panel will consist of WPD Police Chief Gordon Ramsey, Dr.

Karen Countryman-Roswurm, Senator Oletha Faust-Goudeau,

Claudia Amaro, AJ Bohannon, and Peter Ninemire.

Tuesday Topics: Hate Crimes in Kansas

Tuesday, February 27, 12:00 - 1:00 pm

Wichita Public Library, 223 S Main St, 3rd floor



We'll begin calling for our Annual Phone-a-thon in the next few weeks

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