



2021

PUBLIC POLICY POSITIONS

THE JEWISH COUNCIL FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS (JCPA) is the national policy and advocacy hub of the Jewish community relations field, representing over 125 local Jewish community relations councils and 16 national Jewish agencies, including the four denominations of American Judaism. Together our network builds consensus on behalf of the entire Jewish community to promote a just and pluralistic American society, support peace and security in Israel and advocate for human rights around the world.

We have prepared the following overview of our positions on issues we anticipate receiving national attention in 2021 to assist the community relations field in responding to future events in the policy arena.

DOMESTIC POLICY

Immigration



Rooted in Jewish values and traditions, JCPA advocates for compassionate and robust immigration, asylum, and refugee systems that uphold dignity and respect for human rights, health and safety, and family unity. Our highest priority is securing the repeal of policies and practices that undermine these systems and values. This includes ending immigration detention and investing instead in community-based alternatives like case management and legal orientation. We support a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers and undocumented immigrants, as well as lawful permanent resident status for Temporary Protected Status holders and Deferred Enforced Departure recipients, and we continue to advocate for higher refugee admissions and a fair and generous asylum system that upholds due process. Border security and enforcement must be evidence-based, consistent with humanitarian and environmental values, and only included as part of a broader reform package.

Civil Rights



JCPA is committed to protecting and advancing civil rights for all Americans. We will continue to focus on protecting individuals from discrimination on the basis race, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, and disability. We will work with the executive branch to ensure that civil rights statutes—such as the Hate Crimes Prevention Act and updates to the Americans with Disabilities Act—are implemented and enforced.

Criminal Justice Reform



The suffering of millions at the hands of our unjust criminal legal system is one of the most pressing civil rights crises of our time. The U.S. is the leading incarcerator in the world. JCPA believes that we must reorient our society toward a preventive, rehabilitative, and restorative justice approach to public safety that respects and protects the humanity of all people. Our highest priority is ending mass incarceration and its disproportionate impact on people and communities of color. Making communities safer and more equitable requires investing in non-carceral programs and social services, including education, housing, employment, health care, and other public benefits. We believe that reimagining public safety and the role of policing is essential to creating a just society.

Voting Rights and Access



JCPA believes that the right to vote and participate in our democracy is a core American Jewish value—a civic and religious duty. The bedrock of our democratic process is the right of every eligible citizen to cast a ballot and have that ballot counted. Achieving a government that is responsive to the needs and aspirations of its people is possible only through maximum citizen participation in the electoral process. Since the Supreme Court's 2013 ruling gutting the Voting Rights Act, many states have enacted laws that suppress the vote, targeting low-income communities and communities of color. JCPA opposes these efforts. We are committed to ensuring fair and representative elections, increasing access to voting—including for the millions of formerly incarcerated people, and securing robust campaign finance reform. JCPA also maintains its long-time support for D.C. statehood.

Separation of Church and State



As a religious minority, Jews have a stake in ensuring that the U.S. remains committed to both freedom of religion and separation of church and state. Since its founding, JCPA has worked to find an appropriate balance between religious liberty and other civil rights when they clash. JCPA will continue to fight efforts to repeal or weaken the Johnson Amendment, which would bring partisan politics into nonprofits and houses of worship. While we are sensitive to questions of individual conscience, we are equally concerned about governmental policies that lead to discrimination.

Poverty, Health Care, Food Security



JCPA works to build a more just and equitable society. JCPA believes that Congress and the Administration should provide the necessary assistance to ensure that every person is able to sustain a basic standard of living. We strongly support raising the minimum wage to \$15, ensuring everyone living in the U.S. has access to affordable, quality health care and housing, and expanding the Earned Income and Child Tax Credits. We remain committed to increasing eligibility and funding for critical social safety net programs, such as Medicaid, Social Security, SNAP, WIC, and TANF. To lift the next generation out of poverty,

we also support full funding for child nutrition programs. Race, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or employment should never be determinative of access to affordable housing or the quality, timeliness, or outcomes of care.

Education

Education is one of the most important determinants of lifetime earnings, social mobility, and health outcomes. In a society that prides itself on being the “land of opportunity,” race and poverty should not be the deciding factor in a child’s prospects for the future. Yet our nation’s public schools are chronically underfunded and underperforming, especially within low-income and rural communities. The problems that afflict our education system begin early, starting with the inaccessibility of affordable, high-quality preschools. Increasing the availability and affordability of early childhood education is one of the surest ways to close the achievement gap. Ensuring equitable, quality public education, from early childhood education to robust after-school programs to post-secondary education, is vital to reducing socioeconomic and racial inequities.



Economic Opportunity

Every American is entitled to a living wage with paid sick and family leave, the right to unionize and collectively bargain, and receive fair pay. We can boost the economy by investing in sustainable employment and infrastructure, schools, hospitals, renewable energy, and technological innovation. JCPA supports targeted employment and job retraining assistance to specific regions and populations struggling economically, including low-income individuals, women, people of color, people with disabilities, seniors, veterans, youth, and the long-term unemployed. Any comprehensive strategy to combat poverty must include strengthening the assets—from home equity to savings to pensions and retirement accounts—of low-income families, particularly for people of color, historically denied the ability to accumulate wealth and assets.



INTERNATIONAL POLICY

Israeli-Palestinian Peace

JCPA works to promote a strong, vibrant Israel that is committed to peace, and continues to encourage the U.S. government to pursue a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian-Arab conflict through diplomacy. Our organization strongly advocates for two independent, democratic, and economically-viable states: the Jewish state of Israel and a Palestinian state, coexisting in peace and security. This vision can only be achieved through direct negotiations. Unilateral attempts to achieve Palestinian statehood through United Nations action are counterproductive. JCPA’s network unanimously endorsed efforts to promote Israeli-Palestinian coexistence, and we will continue to support Congressional funding for such initiatives.



International Humanitarian and Human Rights Crises

JCPA supports the vigorous protection of human rights as an integral part of U.S. foreign policy, especially in situations involving genocide, mass atrocities, and sweeping population shifts due to displacement by violence, persecution, and climate change. We will continue to raise awareness and advocate for the U.S. government and international community to hold the Burmese military accountable for perpetrating a genocide against the Rohingya people and to end the genocide and forced labor of the Uyghur by the Chinese Communist Party. JCPA also believes that the U.S. and the international community must respond to today’s unprecedented refugee crisis by significantly increasing annual refugee admissions.



Climate Change

Climate change is an international threat and one of the defining issues of our time. Climate change is already increasing the intensity and frequency of extreme weather events, exacerbating armed conflict and unprecedented global migration, threatening the biodiversity on which humans depend, and exacerbating racial and socioeconomic inequities. By supporting policies that promote renewable energy and other clean energy innovations, we can end our dependence on fossil fuels, protect the environment, and mitigate the impacts of climate change, particularly acute for people of color and low-income people.



International Terrorism

JCPA encourages Congress and the Administration to implement strong U.S. policies to counter international terrorism, including state-sponsored terrorism. The U.S. government must work with our allies to implement comprehensive strategies to prevent and respond to terrorism, including freezing the assets of groups and individuals that have been linked to terrorism, strengthening international cooperation on weapons control, and halting nuclear proliferation.



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