

2024 Public Advocacy Report

The Rev. Dr. Teresa Danieleley, Missioner for Public Advocacy, and Mr. Jeff Wunrow, Associate Missioner for Gun Violence Prevention

At the November 2023 Convention, several generous donors helped the Episcopal Diocese of Missouri to purchase an initial subscription to Voter Voice - an online tool for Episcopalians (and people who share our beliefs) to take direct action on specific legislation moving in the Missouri Legislature. More importantly, Voter Voice is an organizing tool that will help Missioners to gather and train Episcopalians to make their Baptismal values heard in direct conversations with their legislators. Thanks to many donors, we will be able to renew the Episcopal Diocese of Missouri's subscription for Voter Voice in 2025 and we hope that the Diocese of West Missouri and other organizations may join us in sharing the cost in future years, as well.

Ironically, in 2024's legislative session, a record number of bills were filed in the Missouri Legislature, but very little actually moved due to the infighting of an Election year. The surprising lack of movement in the Legislature gave Jeff Wunrow and I the opportunity to receive training in Voter Voice and to practice using it and fine tuning it during the 2024 Legislative Session. Despite the lack of movement in the Missouri Legislative Session, 332 people engaged and 155 actions were taken through Voter Voice.

Additionally, I met with the Diocesan Education Equity Working Group, preached and taught in many congregations and presented to the Emery Washington Deanery. I appreciate all of the support that individuals and congregations in the Episcopal Diocese of Missouri gave to support ballot initiatives this year, especially Prop A to Raise the Wage and give hourly workers access to Earned Paid Sick Leave.

I am so very thankful for the organizing acumen and energy that Jeff Wunrow, Associate Missioner for Gun Violence Prevention, brings to Public Advocacy work, to creating the Vote Faithfully resources and to Voter Voice. His work this year has been crucial and inspiring.

Because of Jeff, these Achievements in Public Advocacy were made in 2024:

- Participated in monthly conference calls with the Episcopal Election Activators, organized by EPPN
- Created flyers on seven current issues linking policy positions of the national Church with nonpartisan statewide organizations offering resources on candidate positions to be shared as election information.
- Recruited fourteen authors for a weekly series of "Election Reflections" published in Proclaim
- Worked with GVP Parish Reps to share these resources with their churches.
- Worked with Janis Greenbaum and AhSa-Ti Nu Ford on a communications strategy for VF
- Worked with our counterparts at the Episcopal Diocese of Western Missouri to encourage them to share these resources as well.

If I were paid even 10 hours a week, I would love to train volunteers to be ready to testify in the Missouri Legislature every week of the Missouri Legislative Session from January through May, so that the voices of faithful Christians in the Episcopal Diocese of Missouri would be on the record in all deliberations in Jefferson City. I would love to support the administrative work of my fellow Missioners year round, so that they are able to more capably engage the mission they have been charged with. Anyone may contact me at publicadvocacy@diocesemo.org or call/text me at 314-503-7415.

Challenges

- Communications Reach: Our most widely shared communications tool, Proclaim, only reaches 15% of our membership, or approximately 1500 Episcopalians. Extending that readership necessitates asking staff or lay leaders at each parish to include information in their communications tools as well. I venture to say that as a member of a parish, I am also a member of the diocese, and therefore would expect to receive communications from the diocese also—if not weekly, then monthly.

We propose to ask all parishes to share the emails of their members to be added to the Proclaim distribution list, with clear instructions for how to opt into the weekly emails as well, or to opt out entirely.