

## **THIS IS WHAT DEMOCRACY LOOKS LIKE INTERFAITH IMPACT OF NEW YORK STATE: A CASE STUDY**

Interfaith Impact of New York State is a coalition of individuals and congregations from Reform Jewish, progressive Protestant and Unitarian Universalist traditions working for the common good through progressive religious advocacy. We address emerging public policies and their legislative implications from the shared faith traditions of our constituencies.

IINYS consists of a statewide interfaith board of directors and Executive Director Robb Smith, who works in Albany. You are invited to visit our website [www.interfaithimpactnys.org](http://www.interfaithimpactnys.org) for backgrounders, position papers, and legislative updates. Our membership is open to all.

Interfaith Impact is not a lobbying group, serving our self-interest. We are a religious advocacy community, working toward a distinctly moral vision of equity and justice. Our focus is on the human infrastructure of the state. We do policy, not politics.

Usually in early May IINYS sponsors an annual Advocacy Day in Albany (exact date to be announced). There participants are briefed on selected issues and then visit legislators and staff as well as distribute position papers on those issues to every legislative office.

Interfaith Impact of New York State is the successor group to NYS Interfaith Impact. NYSII was created in 1992 by the constituent groups, and was a fiscal creature of the New York State Council of Churches. With the reorganization of the Council into the NYS Community of Churches in 1998, NYSII found itself without an organizational home. Subsequently, we have reincorporated as an independent organization, Interfaith Impact of New York State, fiscally independent, but with a cooperative relationship with the New York State Council of Churches, Reform Jewish Voice, Unitarian Universalist churches in New York State, with individuals and congregations who share our values. Interfaith Impact of NYS Foundation concentrates on issue education and civil participation (501c3 tax deductible); Interfaith Impact of NYS supports direct issue advocacy (501c4 not tax deductible).

Interfaith Impact is guided by a set of Public Policy Principles agreed to by the Board of Directors, and which are consonant with the General Resolutions of the Unitarian Universalist Association, and the other constituent bodies. Our Board meets monthly via ZOOM conference calls and supports a part-time Executive Director, Robb Smith, who is based in Albany. Advocacy on legislative and executive issues is carried on through e-mail, Facebook, webinars, action alerts, our interactive website (now under reconstruction), legislative briefings like the annual program in Rochester and our annual Advocacy Day in Albany. We are the only multi-issue, interfaith, state-wide group.

IINYS partners with congregations and individuals across the state to lift up our shared moral values in the NY Legislature and Executive Chamber.

IINYS exists to make your progressive, liberal moral values count.

IINYS helps our partners advocate with legislators. We testify at committee hearings, follow legislation, and work with like-minded statewide organizations to increase your impact.

IINYS also maintains a web site ([www.interfaithimpactnys.org](http://www.interfaithimpactnys.org)), with position papers, legislative testimony, and sermons, runs an annual advocacy day, and is on Facebook.

IINYS maintains up-to-date resources on legislation and policy initiatives that concern you and your congregation.

IINYS helps congregations get involved by providing materials for letter writing, petitions and more.

IINYS sends out e-mail alerts, notifications of demonstrations and hearings, is active on Facebook, and offers webinar advocacy training.

IINYS is your state partner in Albany for moral advocacy with the Legislature and Executive Chamber

IINYS offers a justice-loving, compassionate way to look at legislation and State policies. We work for the common good through progressive religious advocacy. We are a vibrant community of caring people working for justice through moral legislative advocacy.

**Discussion:** How can IINYS help your congregation fulfill its social justice mission? How can you help promote the work of IINYS?

**Excerpts from Beatitudes for Justice Builders** – Rev. Lindi Ramsden (Unitarian Universalist minister)

LEADER: Blessed are you who can question your own assumptions and listen with an open mind;

PEOPLE: you will receive new insights beyond your imagining.

LEADER: Blessed are you who suffer the attacks of others to stand up for what is right;

PEOPLE: you are not alone, for your courage will inspire others to rise.

LEADER: Blessed are you who build friendships as well as justice;

PEOPLE: you will strengthen the foundation of your community.

LEADER: Blessed are you who do not demonize your opponents;

PEOPLE: your eyes will be open.

LEADER: Blessed are you who work in coalition rather than in principled isolation:

PEOPLE: you will be effective.

LEADER: Blessed are you who will not let the perfect be the enemy of the good;

PEOPLE: you will see progress in your lifetime.

LEADER: Blessed are you who take delight in people;

PEOPLE: you will not be bored in meetings.

LEADER: Blessed are you who play as well as work;

PEOPLE: you will generate enthusiasm and draw the powers of the impish to your cause.

LEADER: Blessed are you with an active spiritual life;

PEOPLE: you will find perspective in times of loss  
and will rise without cynicism to meet the challenges of a new day.

LEADER: Blessed are you who live from a place of gratitude;

PEOPLE: you will know the meaning of Life.