

Minutes
FMSA Called Meeting for Business
Feb 2nd 2025

Purpose: To consider whether this Meeting wants to support the lawsuit that is being brought by three Yearly Meetings and two Monthly Meetings on the issue of freedom of religion and the current executive decision that churches, hospitals, schools, and courts can be entered for immigration enforcement.

Friends wanted to hear more about the case.

According to the Clerk of New England Yearly Meeting, a plaintiff in the suit, it is a violation of religious freedom to allow ICE to enter a house of worship at any time and against our commitment to open Meeting to all. ICE raids on worshipping communities have already begun, producing a chilling effect on undocumented immigrants as well as those worried about racial profiling and preventing them from attending. Intimidating them from gathering with their faith communities is a violation of their freedoms of religion and association.

The meetings who are plaintiffs in this suit have legal standing to sue because they have already suffered harm due to this order.

In a Wednesday call that South Central Yearly Meeting members attended Friends came to understand that we can offer an amicus brief for the existing case but cannot join the suit since it is already filed. We can also offer public statements which the Clerk would draft with assistance.

Democracy Forward, the organization of lawyers bringing this case, has a donation button, so we could give monetarily to this effort.

Some Friends felt taking action in this matter would be in line with our many messages related to taking action this morning in worship.

A Friend felt there could be no neutral position on this issue as staying silent would be allowing the current situation to continue.

A Friend highlighted the importance of worship communities across many aspects of a person's life as they can be sources of both spiritual support and logistical support such as offering food, transportation, and other assistance.

A Friend pointed out that this rule affects not just us but all faith communities across the country, who we should also want to see protected.

A Friend felt that writing letters to the editor was in order due to the importance of public opinion in an environment where the executive and judicial branches cannot necessarily be relied on to adjudicate disputes fairly.

Friends were told that an amicus brief allows someone not party to the case to offer additional relevant information or arguments. A Friend pointed out that we could contribute our experience of an attender of our Meeting feeling that they cannot safely enter our building to attend worship due to the new rule.

Friends felt strongly about acting on this issue.

A Friend worried that we are moving too quickly in making this decision and could incur retaliation. This Friend wanted to continue discernment before taking public action.

MINUTE 2025.02.01: FMSA approves joining in support of the lawsuit, filed January 27, 2025 by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, New England Yearly Meeting, Baltimore Yearly Meeting, Adelphi Friends Meeting, and Richmond Friends Meeting against the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Kristi Noem, through public statements, an amicus brief, and financial support, with continued discernment.

We will check with the lawyers presenting the case for guidance. We plan to publicize our brief to newspapers and politicians once it is prepared.

A Friend highlighted that it is also important to thank the Meetings who brought this lawsuit to express our gratitude for this action.

Friends will bring the amicus brief draft to the next Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business. We will not plan to have two readings due to the timeliness of the issue.

A Friend expressed that it will be important to allow input by all in the amicus brief.

South Central Yearly Meeting will decide how/if to support this case at the annual sessions this spring. There is no body that could decide for the Yearly Meeting within the month to allow joint action on this issue more quickly.

Friends will wait to decide the specifics of donating to support the legal effort later when we have more information from the legal team.

Friends are asked to send any input/examples that could be helpful for the amicus brief draft to clerk@saquakers.org.