

LATIN AMERICA WORKING GROUP

Action at Home for Just Policies Abroad

ANNUAL REPORT 2004





PHOTO: MAMIS ANDERSON

We believe, like you believe, that our nation's foreign policy should reflect our moral values. Values such as generosity, caring for others, and loving our neighbor. Such as building a world where no child goes hungry, and where we can live together in peace.

We must not let our real fears from 9/11 move us far away from this moral vision of a better world. We should not allow 9/11 to be used to justify foreign policy based so exclusively on military might rather than generosity, diplomacy, respect for international law and human and civil rights. Policies that flow from these values are not only right— they will ultimately make us safer.

I gain courage from the passion of citizens all over the country who care deeply about our foreign policy, towards Latin America and the world. We will work with you to build policies that reflect not just our fears, but our hopes, our dreams—and our values.

Lisa Haugaard

Lisa Haugaard
Executive Director

Who We Are

The Latin America Working Group serves a coalition of nongovernmental, religious, grassroots and humanitarian agencies. We bring coalition partners together to create advocacy and public education campaigns to encourage US policy towards Latin America and the Caribbean that favors human rights, justice, peace and sustainable development.

The Latin America Working Group (LAWG), a 501(c) 4 nonprofit, carries out advocacy and grassroots education. The Latin America Working Group Education Fund (LAWGEF), a 501(c) 3 nonprofit, sponsors educational events and produces publications. In the list of this year's activities, lobbying activities were carried out by the LAWG, and educational activities by the LAWGEF.

2004 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

America's Post-9/11 Role in the World

- Connected Latin America to the larger foreign policy debate through *September's Shadow*, on post-9/11 US-Latin American relations. Using polls, op-eds, aid trends, and case studies of Mexico, Brazil, Colombia, Bolivia and Cuba, the report details

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS*

American Friends Service Committee
Center for Global Education
Center for International Policy
Church of the Brethren
Church Women United
Church World Service
Colombia Human Rights Committee
Cuban American Alliance Education Fund
Disarm Education Fund
Fellowship of Reconciliation
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Global Rights
Guatemala Human Rights Commission
Institute for Policy Studies
International Labor Rights Fund
Jesuit Refugee Service
Loretto Community
Lutheran Office for Governmental Affairs
Lutheran World Relief
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Mennonite Central Committee
Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate



NETWORK/A National Catholic Justice Lobby
NISGUA

North American Congress on Latin America

Oxfam America

Peace Brigades International

Presbyterian Church (USA)

Religious Task Force on Central America/Mexico

RFK Memorial Center for Human Rights

School of the Americas Watch

Sister Parish

Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

United Methodist Church, General Board of Church & Society

United Methodist Church, Women's Division

US Jesuit Conference

US/Labor Education in the Americas Project

US Office on Colombia

Washington Office on Latin America

Witness for Peace

*This list includes some of the groups participating. Participation does not imply endorsement of all LAWG efforts. Decisions to endorse statements and campaigns are made on a case-by-case basis by each participating organization.

the fallout of the Bush Administration's unilateral foreign policy as well as Latin American governments' cooperation on practical counterterrorism measures.

- Exposed the growth in US military programs in Latin America through *Blurring the Lines*. This hard-hitting, graph-filled report showed that the number of Latin American troops trained by the United States jumped 52% in one year and U.S. training increasingly blurs the line between military and civilian roles. *Blurring the Lines*, a joint project with the Center for International Policy and WOLA, was covered by the New York Times, a Miami Herald TV show, and by news media in Latin America.
- Briefed the incoming head of the US military's Southern Command on the human rights problems of Latin American militaries, including the historic tendency to target legitimate, civic opposition.

Cuba: Freedom to Travel

- Successfully advocated for passage of a bill in the House of Representatives to reverse the harsh and inhumane new regulations on travel by Cuban Americans to the island to visit their families.
- Widely distributed our ground-breaking publication, “Ignored Majority: The Moderate Cuban-American Community,” demonstrating significant changes in the Cuban-American community—in favor of dialogue between the two nations, easing travel restrictions, and rethinking the strategy of the embargo.
- Strongly influenced the conventional wisdom about the Cuban-American community in south Florida and its response to the harsh new travel restrictions, through a poll we co-commissioned with the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) and the William C. Velasquez Institute/Mirram Global.
- Brought, with the Center for International Policy, six Cuba travel “victims” to Washington to meet with press and members of Congress and tell their stories of the inhumane effects of the travel ban. Their visit garnered press and congressional attention, and showed the human face of the new travel restrictions.

PHOTO: MAVIS ANDERSON





PHOTO BY ELANOR STARMER

- Distributed our new “end the ban on travel” brochure to over 15,000 people.
- Organized, with WOLA, our annual national consultation on Cuba policy including religious, Cuban-American, grassroots, policy, travel industry, agriculture, and people-to-people groups. The consultation developed a plan of action for a national citizens’ movement to end the travel ban.

Colombia: Defending Human Rights

- Encouraged Senators Feingold and Dodd to send a letter to President Uribe urging the government to break ties between the military and the paramilitary and shelve the plan to grant police powers to the military. LAWGEF organized a campaign with churches, unions and activists, resulting in 23 signers, including Senators Kerry and Edwards. The letter, covered on the front pages of the Colombian media for weeks, convinced the Colombian government that important sectors of the Senate cared about human rights in Colombia.

CHILDREN’S MURAL OF FUMIGATION IN COLOMBIA

- Organized an on-line petition to the presidential candidates that gave individuals across the country the chance to express their wish for a more peaceful policy.
- Appeared on the Neil Cavuto show on Fox News as commentator on Colombia.
- Exposed the human and environmental impact of the aerial spraying program through the comprehensive study, *Going to Extremes*.
- Provided moral support to at-risk Colombian human rights groups and unions by accompanying Rep. Jim McGovern to war-torn Arauca province. At the invitation of Colombia's human rights community, gave an address about how democratic debate enhances, not diminishes, security, at Bogotá's National Convention Center and Medellín's Chamber of Commerce.
- Organized opposition to the doubling of US troops in Colombia While the increase was approved, working closely with concerned citizens in key states, LAWG ensured that it was challenged every step of the way in the Congress.

PHOTO: MAVIS ANDERSON





Representative Ciro Rodriguez meets with the families of murdered women in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico.

For Humane Border Policies

- Raised awareness of the destructive impact of our border policies on human life. Our “Message on a Bottle” campaign with the Border Working Group distributed to members of Congress and staff over 800 bottles of water with labels showing the stories of migrants who died from dehydration crossing the US-Mexico border. This campaign was reproduced in cities all along the border.
- Worked with the National Immigration Forum, the National Council of La Raza, and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Network, to incorporate sensible border security proposals—ones that make us safer from terrorism without increasing the deaths of migrants—into the immigration reform debate.

Investigating the Deaths of Ciudad Juarez Women

- Worked with our allies in Congress to secure a remarkable 137 co-sponsors to a House resolution expressing concern for the murdered women of Ciudad Juarez, Mexico and secure 13 co-sponsors to a Senate resolution. Our work has led to personal discussion of the issue between Presidents Fox and Bush.

- Led a highly successful fact-finding delegation, in coordination with the Washington Office on Latin America, to Ciudad Juarez and Chihuahua to evaluate progress on the investigations into the murders of women.

Guatemala: Reform of the Military

- Organized a nongovernmental letter to new President Oscar Berger laying out a set of benchmarks regarding reform of the military and investigation of clandestine networks involved in corruption, human rights violations and drug trafficking.
- Urged attention to these benchmarks in in-depth meetings with Guatemala's Vice President and the US Ambassador to Guatemala.
- Successfully worked with Congress to ensure these benchmarks were used in deciding whether to lift the ban on military aid, which continues in place.

PHOTO: MAVIS ANDERSON

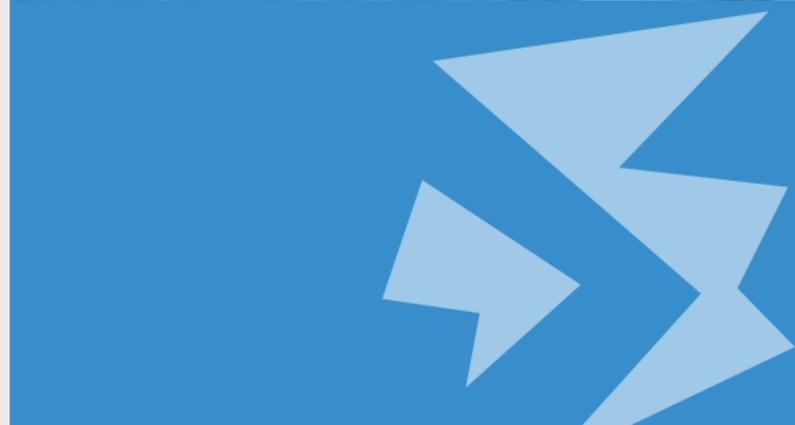




PHOTO: JENNIFER TROWBRIDGE

Acknowledgments

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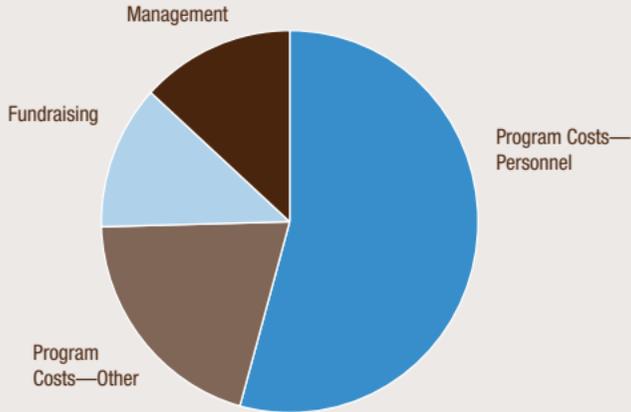
PHOTO: SEAN GARCIA

Finances

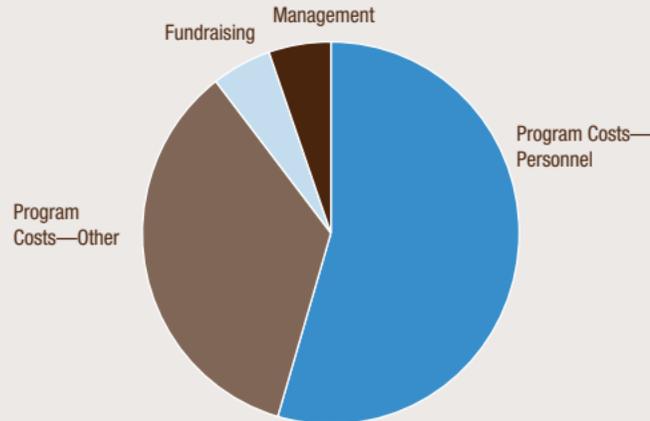
LAWG's income of \$73,970 for 2003 came primarily from contributions by coalition members and other nongovernmental and religious organizations, as well as by individual donors.

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LAWG expenses



LAWGEF expenses



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See our website to order our bimonthly newsletter, *The Advocate*; to join our email listservs on Cuba, Colombia and US/Mexico border issues; or to order our special reports, donate and stay informed.

Action at Home for Just Policies Abroad

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