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Featured in this newsletter:

1. JCIRA General Meeting Agenda - 2/24 @ 5:00pm
2. Biography of Brenda Rodriguez Lopez, Exec. Dir. of WAISN
3. Welcome to Afghan family by JCIRA Sponsorship Circle
4. Washington Legislative Update
5. Congratulations to JCIRA member Doug Humes!
6. Good News Department

Join Us for JCIRA's General Meeting on February 24th!

We'll still be holding our meeting virtually from 5:00pm to 6:30pm on Thursday, 2/24. JCIRA will welcome Brenda Rodriguez Lopez as our featured speaker. You can see a biography of Brenda below following the link and agenda.

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89742421355?
pwd=TUkwS2FKUGRFbHN2OEZRQVpmdk5FUT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89742421355?pwd=TUkwS2FKUGRFbHN2OEZRQVpmdk5FUT09)

Meeting ID: 897 4242 1355

Passcode: JCIRA

Agenda for General Meeting:

- 1) Welcome to Afghan family to Port Townsend & Update on Sponsorship Circle
- 2) Report Back on WAISN Advocacy Days & Legislative Update
- 3) Featured speaker Brenda Rodriguez Lopez (see below)

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BRENDA RODRIGUEZ LOPEZ

Executive Director of WAISN - WA Immigrant Solidarity Network

Brenda Rodriguez Lopez is an undocumented and unapologetic organizer, strategist, and storyteller. She arrived in the United States at the age of nine, when her family left her home country of Mexico. She began organizing her community as a response to the deep racism and xenophobia she experienced growing up in rural Washington.

She joined WAISN in 2018, eager to fight back against those same structures: racism, xenophobia, and an out-of-control ICE agency. Based in Central and Eastern Washington, she focused on building and deepening the relationships, leadership, and skills of our community

Her lived experience has informed the creation of impactful programs, including courthouse accompaniments, a rapid-response hotline, and deportation defense strategies to reunite families & dismantle the deportation machine. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she co-led the strategy to win and implement the Washington Immigrant Relief Fund which has distributed over \$127 million in economic relief to undocumented people across the state.

As WAISN's executive director, Brenda leads our diverse and powerful statewide network of 400 organizations across Washington State. She envisions a world where all people are free, regardless of their immigration status.

JCIRA & Port Townsend Welcome Afghan Family!

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Jersey and a chaotic airport arrival. They were exhausted. Now that they have been here a few days they have recovered from that ordeal and are beginning to adapt to their new home.

Ali and Storya are friendly, pleasant, and grateful for the opportunity to begin a new life in this country. Nihal is a beautiful and lively two and a half year old, who loves to greet others with a smile and wave.

Ali and Storya both have some English in addition to their native language of Pashto. Communication can be somewhat difficult but, with a bit of effort, we are able to understand each other. Nihal likes to chatter and sing and makes lots of sounds, undoubtedly familiar to other children her age.

Ali is anxious to be able to work. Storya plans to complete her education. Both say they will work hard to improve their English.

Thanks to the generosity of a number of people, their apartment is furnished and mostly equipped. As of this writing there are a few items still needed, but by the time you read this those needs should be satisfied. Food basics have been supplied and the family has been shopping to get the kinds of foods they need and prefer. The family follows a “halal” diet so many food products and common dishes are forbidden to them. We are making arrangements to ensure that acceptable foods are available to them.

With time we will learn more about our new friends and will share that knowledge with JCIRA members and eventually with the community. For now it is important to respect their privacy and to give them time to become comfortable in their new home in a new culture.

If you are moved to help this family, the best way right now is to make a monetary contribution. Checks can be made out to JCIRA with Afghan Circle in the memo line and mailed to

Jefferson County Immigrant Rights Advocates
P.O. Box 647
Port Townsend, WA 98368

For background information on the resettlement of Afghan evacuees see the article re Sponsorship Circles in the January JCIRA newsletter on this [JCIRA website link](#)

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Take Action on Washington Legislation!

1) LANGUAGE ACCESS IN K-12 SCHOOLS (HB 1153)

This bill will ensure families can meaningfully engage in their child's education through quality and effective language access supports. It will create district level language access coordinators, set standards for interpreters, and collect more data on the issue.

Due to your pressure, the bill successfully passed off the House Floor with a majority in favor of 83-13!!

Next step: The bill has to go through the same process in the Senate and we need a hearing in the Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education Committee! [You can take action with us and One America by sending a letter requesting a hearing here.](#)

2) REDUCING RACISM IN OUR ELECTION SYSTEMS (E2SSB 5597)

Together, we led the way to pass the WA Voting Rights Act (WVRA) in 2018 to fight racist voting systems. And this year we had our first win in Yakima County. However, we need to ensure we don't have to rely on costly lawsuits to enforce it. This legislation will update the WVRA, requiring election changes are approved and fair before they happen.

Thanks to your efforts the bill was passed by the Senate and now awaits a public hearing in the House Committee on State Government & Tribal Relations. You can show your support and comment on this bill directly at the [Washington State Legislature link.](#)

Note: #1 and 2 above were updated from the One America weekly legislative update. For more information on their legislative agenda go to [We Are One America website.](#)

3) HEALTH EQUITY FOR IMMIGRANTS CAMPAIGN (BUDGET PROVISIO)

Today over 100,000 of Washington's immigrants are uninsured. We need to

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involved. I believe that immigration, and the infusion of new ideas and energy that comes with it, will play a big part in solving some of our pressing national issues."

Welcome to the AR Team!

GOOD NEWS DEPARTMENT

1. Improvements in Immigration Attitudes in Arizona. Attitudes in Arizona toward immigrants in the past decade have been shifting from denying public services to undocumented immigrants — making them feel unwelcome — to a more welcoming tone, said sociologist Tomas Jimenez. He is co-author of the book, "States of Belonging: Immigration Policies, Attitudes and Inclusion." For an introduction to this book see the [Russell Sage Foundation website](#).

2. Illinois praised for immigration reforms Immigration advocates praised Illinois for enacting reforms to improve the lives of immigrants. Immigrant rights groups helped craft and lobbied for a new law that extends eligibility for Medicaid and state-based financial aid to immigrants regardless of their legal status. For more go to this website at [NPR affiliate at Illinois State University](#).

3. Mexican Town Survives on Money from U.S.

An indigenous community in the pine-clad mountains of Mexico survives mainly on money sent home by migrants working in the United States. The money allowed families to remain in the area as woodworking sales decreased. [For more go the ABC News website here](#).

4. Study Finds Immigrants Trust Religious Institutions, Community Groups.

Immigrants in New York City still fear accessing public benefits and protection even with a new president in the White House, according to a Center for Migration Studies report. The study found that religious institutions, immigrant-serving community groups and schools were among the organizations immigrants trusted most. For more see the [National Catholic Reporter website](#).

5. The Hill: Immigration Seen as Fueling U.S. Population Growth

The number of immigrants in the United States has reached a historic high of 46.2 million. Immigration accounted for 62 percent of the population growth from July 2020 to July 2021. Immigration is expected to be the main driver of

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Our mission is to support the rights of immigrants and their families, giving priority to those who live or work on the Olympic Peninsula and immigrant detainees within Washington State, through access to legal services, standing witness, family support, community education and advocacy for local, state and national issues.



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