

Indivisible Skagit Immigrant Support Task Force

2021 Action Report



The **Immigrant Support Task Force** is a working group of Indivisible Skagit. The Task Force was formed in 2017 as Donald Trump was inaugurated US President on a platform of persecuting, excluding, and deporting immigrants. People in Skagit were concerned about the safety and well-being of our neighbors and community members, especially those who are undocumented.

We remain concerned about the well-being and safety of our community members despite the change in administrations. While leadership in the current administration speaks of policy changes, they have not yet demonstrated an ability to rein in the behavior of ICE/CBP in our community.

Our goal is to provide concrete, specific, tangible support to immigrants in Skagit by responding to the needs they express to us directly. We have continued this important work even during the pandemic, adapting what we do in light of health and safety guidance.

We welcome new members. We provide training for all our activities. You do not need to speak Spanish to join in. Many of our members do not. But, if you do speak Spanish, or any of the indigenous languages spoken by the local immigrant community, we need your help. Task Force actions are rewarding on many levels. Don't miss the chance to take action on your values. Get connected to the Task Force by email to info@IndivisibleSkagit.org

2021 Action Report

The Task Force focused our intention on **strengthening relationships with our ally organizations** during 2021.

We continued to receive and respond to referrals from **Washington Immigrant Solidarity Network (WAISN)**.

We responded to requests for assistance directly from community members, and worked with **Immigrant Resources & Immediate Support (IRIS)**, the **CCS Farmworker Center**, and **Community to Community Development** to meet these needs.

Here is a **sampling of the range of needs** we responded to in 2021:

Families needing immediate food assistance

Families with a family member abducted by ICE/CBP

A mom and daughter fleeing domestic violence and resettling in Skagit (Task Force member Judy led this effort.)

Raising funds for families needing immediate housing

Connecting families needing rent relief with local resources

An asylum seeker relocated to Skagit from detention in Louisiana. We assisted South Whidbey Immigrant Allies who took the lead on this with vigorous response from our allies on Guemes Island who provided housing for 6 months while this young man got oriented.

A family that needed help completing forms for charity relief from Skagit Regional Hospital. (Task Force member John took the lead on this.) In the process we learned that the Northwest Justice Project is monitoring Skagit Hospital for lack of transparency and poor treatment of people needing charity relief.

Farmworkers Center (CCS) report:

Throughout the year we collaborated with Guillermina and Marta to collect items needed for the Farmworker Center. Task force members Ellie and Robin lead this team.

Here's a synopsis of some of the highlights:

- Winter 2021: we collected multiple bags of warm wool socks and gloves,
- Spring 2021: we asked for people to mail checks directly for emergency supplies,
- Summer: people sent money for a direct ask for adult diapers, and we bought almost 200 for a young woman living with her family in an RV,
- Fall 2021: we collected more than 30 back packs for kids returning to school. Also, Task Force members Ellie and Heidi are collaborating with MONA to serve 40-50 children (K-12) to provide drive-through back packs with art supplies beginning now through spring for children to create art studios at home culminating in a June art show.

Citizenship Prep

This working group group, including Task force members Anne, Mary, Judy, and Carmen, helped distribute fliers for **Skagit Community Action** citizenship prep class; then received volunteer training and citizenship prep workshop through the **Goodwill Job Training and Education Center (GWJTEC)**. Some members have attended the regular citizenship class taught by Tania Siler and are doing individual tutoring with GWJTEC students in English proficiency who are also prospective candidates for citizenship exam.

At the last Task force meeting in December 2021, Rosalinda (ED from C2C) expressed interest in connecting with new citizens with information about voting rights and civic engagement. Our team is reaching out to Goodwill about this, and we plan to support this effort as it develops.

Skagit Rapid Response and Accompaniment Team

This working group has two areas of focus: Rapid Response to ICE/CPB enforcement actions, (and continuing support of family members as needed); and Court Accompaniment including attending court hearings as well as jail releases. Court accompaniment activities continued to be significantly hampered by the continuing Covid pandemic.

We have received word from public defenders of a significant reduction of ICE presence after jail releases which may indicate the effectiveness of this accompaniment as well as the pressure we brought to bear on the jail administration around KWW compliance during 2020.

We remain concerned that there is no system for tracking ICE/CBP presence in the jail and plan a meeting with the Sheriff/Jail leadership this spring. Another area of concern we intend to pursue is the sharing of information between jail staff and bail bonds staff which has impacted immigrant community members' ability to secure bail. While we got a commitment from Chief of Corrections Don Marlow to stop allowing ICE detainer requests being placed in inmates' files (which allows staff access to the information), we have not received written confirmation that he has instructed his staff they are prohibited from sharing information with bail bonds companies.

Tenant Accompaniment Team

We trained and launched a team offering accompaniment for tenants who are working through issues with their landlords. We can share information about tenants' rights, help folks connect with organizations

providing rent assistance, and help with applications for federal and state funding. We can contact a landlord at the request of a tenant to facilitate resolutions to problems, and be present with tenants for lease signings, move-in and move-out inspections, or help with getting damage deposits back. We have both English and Spanish speakers on our team.

This team distributed 400 tenants rights fliers at area food banks and other locations, and developed a resource packet for team members based on the training we received from Tenants Union of WA, and Bellingham Tenants Union.

If you know someone who needs this service, or you want to join our team, contact us at tenantsupport@indivisibleskagit.org

Our local partner organizations are: **Immigrant Resources & Immediate Support (IRIS)** <https://irisnw.org>, **Community to Community Development** <https://www.foodjustice.org>, and **CCS Farmworker Center** <https://ccsww.org/get-help/specialized-services/farmworker-center/>, as well as the **TriParish Food Bank** located at St. Charles Catholic Church in Burlington. We also work extensively with **Washington Immigrant Solidarity Network (WAISN)** <https://www.waisn.org>,

In addition to working with our local partner organizations, **Indivisible Skagit Immigrant Support Task Force** encourages our members and our community to support **La Resistencia** <https://laresistencianw.org/> fighting to close the Northwest Detention Center; **Northwest Immigrant Rights Project** <https://www.nwirp.org/> providing legal representation and other support to detainees and their families, the **Fair Fight Bond Fund** <https://fairfightbondfund.org/> raising funds to bond community members out of detention, and **Mijente** <https://mijente.net/> for their national action.