

Mary Novak to lead Network lobby

by [Jack Jenkins](#) in the [April 21, 2021](#) issue



(Photo courtesy of Network)

Catholic social justice lobby Network has chosen Georgetown University law professor Mary Novak to take over the group after longtime leader Simone Campbell retires.

Novak joins Network after serving as associate director of mission integration at the Georgetown University Law Center, where she also works as an adjunct professor. She also boasts a background in Catholic advocacy: she was the founding board chair of Catholic Mobilizing Network, helping lead advocacy efforts to abolish the death penalty.

Although Novak acknowledged that the art of lobbying is a “growing edge” for her personally, she and Campbell also have notable points of intersection.

“We’re both lawyers, and all that comes with that: the discipline in our thinking, legal practice training, and the discipline in our action,” Novak said. Novak said she and Campbell are also “contemplatives in action.”

“[My spirituality] is grounded in the Ignatian tradition, which is also the spirituality of the Congregation of St. Joseph, of which I am an associate,” she said.

But Novak said she hopes to bring unique attributes to Network, which often forges close connections with public officials and lawmakers. She pointed to her experience as a spiritual director and a peacebuilder, saying, “That kind of presence could possibly be helpful on Capitol Hill these days.”

Asked what Catholic public witness should look like in the current political era, Novak made reference to Pope Francis and what she described as his emphasis on “starting with encounter.”

She aspires to bring a similar approach to her own advocacy: “You start where you must: in the lives of real people.” —Religion News Service