

Our “Bring Our Billion\$ Home” Campaign Persists with Outreach and Other Activities

U.S. Conference of Mayors strongly urged Congress and Obama to stop the wars, cut the military budget, and use the savings to fund local needs:

Mayors from around the US met in Baltimore in June to set public policy for the billions of people living in big cities, depending on municipal services to stay safe. On June 20 the National Conference of Mayors passed a bold statement that strongly supports the message that the Olympia FOR, Western Washington FOR, Veterans for Peace, CodePink, American Friends Service Committee, War Resisters League, and other peace and civic groups have been organizing. We call our campaign “Bring Our Billion\$ Home,” and other organizations have their own names for their own campaigns. The message is clear, and the mayors – who are closer to the grassroots people than Obama and Congress are – understand the vital need to stop the wars, cut the military budget, and use the savings to fund local needs. **See the box in the right column.**

Here is the text of the resolution that the U.S. Conference of Mayors passed at their annual meeting in Baltimore on June 20, 2011:

CALLING ON CONGRESS TO REDIRECT MILITARY SPENDING TO DOMESTIC PRIORITIES

WHEREAS, every member of the US Conference of Mayors and the Americans they represent, support our brave men and women in uniform and their families;

WHEREAS, the drawdown of troops should be done in a measured way that does not destabilize the region and that can accelerate the transfer of responsibility to regional authorities;

WHEREAS, the severity of the ongoing economic crisis has created budget shortfalls at all levels of government and requires us to re-examine our national spending priorities; and

WHEREAS, the people of the United States are collectively paying approximately \$126 billion dollars per year to wage war in Iraq and Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, 6,024 members of the US armed forces have died in these wars; and at least 120,000 civilians have been killed in Iraq and Afghanistan since the coalition attacks began.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the United States Conference of Mayors supports efforts to speed up the ending of these wars; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the United States Conference of Mayors calls on the President and U.S. Congress to end the wars as soon as strategically possible and bring these war dollars home to meet vital human needs, promote job creation, rebuild our infrastructure, aid municipal and state governments, and develop a new economy based upon renewable, sustainable energy and reduce the federal debt.

On July 11 the Seattle City Council passed a resolution supporting the above resolution of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, which calls on the President and the U.S. Congress to **end the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and to “bring these war dollars home to meet vital human needs....”**

We invite you to participate in the “**Bring Our Billion\$ Home**” campaign, organized by Olympia FOR, Western Washington FOR, and other local FOR chapters in Western and Eastern Washington. Olympia’s campaign organizers meet every few weeks to plan more activities. Our next general meeting will occur on Saturday September 17 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at a location to be confirmed soon.

The Olympia FOR’s “Bring Our Billion\$ Home” campaign also accomplishes work through committees. What are your interests? We can connect you!

For more information contact Glen Anderson at (360) 491-9093 or glen@olympiafor.org

Audit the Department of Defense!

A clever strategy toward cutting the military budget would be to have the federal government audit the Department of Defense. We are tapping into a nationwide movement that is bringing together many diverse Americans. The Department of Defense has lost track of many, many billions of dollars but – unlike other agencies – has not been audited. The public is angry about wasteful “big government” programs, and the DoD is the biggest and most wasteful of them all! The public will want to join with us! Let’s pressure Congress to force an audit. We can generate letters to editors and other publicity. We want to get political parties, newspaper editorial boards, and others to call for this. We have drafted a resolution that various organizations could adopt, calling upon Congress to audit the DoD.

On June 27 the Thurston County Democrats passed the resolution calling upon Congress to audit the Department of Defense. David Edwards organized this effort. He reports that three persons spoke enthusiastically in support and nobody spoke against it. The resolution passed unanimously. In the course of this effort he distributed some of our BOBH literature items. **Here is the resolution’s wording. Please consider adapting this and urging other organizations to adopt it:**

1. Whereas, the ongoing economic crisis has raised the federal deficit to its highest point since 1945, making it necessary for Congress to have the tools to review the entire federal budget; and
2. Whereas, on the 50th anniversary of President Eisenhower’s warning that we must guard against the unwarranted influence by the military-industrial complex; and
3. Whereas, the Department of Defense is the only department that has failed to comply with the 1990s Chief Financial Officers’ Act requiring all federal agencies to provide annual auditable statements; and
4. Whereas, the General Accounting Office in September of 2009 cited serious financial management problems at the Department of Defense whereby the Defense Contract Audit Agency failed to follow basic auditing standards in 65 of 69 audits, noting that the agency lacks independence from the contractors it audits; and
5. Whereas, the lack of accountability puts the Department of Defense at high risk for massive waste, fraud, abuse and losses of hundreds of millions or even billions of dollars; and
6. Whereas, the Pentagon has failed to manage and control operating and support costs for major weapons systems, whose costs have not yet been quantified,

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Thurston County Democrats call on the Washington State Democratic Party, and the Congressional delegates from Thurston County, and our state’s U.S. Senators to insist on an immediate, meaningful and public audit of the Department of Defense.

We are organizing to communicate with our local Congress members

The line between the 3rd and 9th Congressional Districts runs through our community, so our local BOBH campaign has organized separate committees to interact with the U.S. House members Jaime Herrera Beutler (3rd Cong.Dist.) and Adam Smith (9th Cong.Dist.), chaired by Charlie Stephens and Chuck Schultz, respectively. Each committee is developing a different strategy for dealing with each representative (one a conservative Republican serving her first term, and the other an entrenched Democrat who supports a big military). We’re anticipating written correspondence and in-person delegations to their local offices.

We are planning outreach to organizations and the general public

We set two goals for May 2013. One goal is that at least 50% of Thurston County’s adults will call for cutting the military budget, and another goal is to make presentations to 50 local organizations, urging them to work on our “Bring Our Billion\$ Home” campaign.