



The Peace Alliance

# I Stand for Peace

*Petition to  
Make Violence Reduction and Prevention a National Priority*

September 11, 2008

TO: Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, House Minority Leader John Boehner, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell:

Violence pervades American culture, and its impact is devastating. Consider just a few sobering statistics:

- The World Health Organization estimates the cost of interpersonal violence in the U.S. at **\$300 billion per year**. The cost to victims was estimated at more than **\$500 billion per year**.<sup>1</sup>
- U.S. youth homicide rates are more than **10 times** that of other leading industrial nations.<sup>2</sup>
- Direct expenditures for corrections by local, state and federal governments between 1982 and 2004 **increased 585 percent to \$62 billion** per year.<sup>3</sup>

All told, domestic interpersonal violence consumes nearly **10% of our national Gross Domestic Product (GDP)**<sup>4</sup>. **And this does NOT include war-related costs.**

As staggering as this financial cost is, the human cost is even greater.

The heartbreak of this tremendous waste is that it is largely preventable. We have skilled experts in the science of peacebuilding, effective programs that reduce and prevent violence, and our colleges and universities are already training the next generation of peacebuilders.

**What we lack is the political will, visionary leadership, and institutional platform** needed to create a strategic, focused effort to empower our citizens, communities and country to resolve conflict before it erupts into violence.

We the undersigned are standing for peace, asking that you **make the issue of violence reduction and prevention a national priority** in the coming Congress. We can no longer stand idly by as a largely preventable phenomenon destroys lives and drains our national assets.

More than 300 colleges and universities give degrees in Peacebuilding and Peace Studies. The current spectrum of our peacebuilding expertise includes leading edge technologies in the fields of conflict resolution, peer mediation, post-conflict reconstruction and many other forms of alternative dispute resolution (ADR). Countless programs across the nation have been proven to effectively reduce and prevent bullying, school violence, recidivism, domestic violence, dependency on social services, crime, and more—and they have done so while saving taxpayer dollars.

Regrettably, current policy-making tends toward reactive, not proactive, approaches to reducing violence. We typically wait until violence has occurred and then ask our already over-taxed police and military to address these *symptoms* of violence through activities such as imprisonment of offenders and engagement in armed conflict. While such suppression of symptoms is vital, it is incomplete and must be augmented by stronger preventative measures, with a specific focus on the identification and treatment of root causes.

Please join us in saying, “I Stand for Peace.” **Make violence reduction and prevention a national priority in the next Congress.** Help us save lives, save money, and save our country for future generations.

<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization, *The Economic Dimensions of Interpersonal Violence*, 2004

<sup>2</sup> World Health Organization, *World Report on Violence and Health*, 2002

<sup>3</sup> Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Direct Expenditures by Criminal Justice Function, 1982-2004*

<sup>4</sup> World Health Organization, *The Economic Dimensions of Interpersonal Violence*, 2004



The Peace Alliance

**I Stand for Peace**  
*Petition to*  
**Make Violence Reduction and Prevention a National Priority**

Name	E-mail	Phone (10 digit)	
Street	City	State	Zip
Name	E-mail	Phone (10 digit)	
Street	City	State	Zip
Name	E-mail	Phone (10 digit)	
Street	City	State	Zip
Name	E-mail	Phone (10 digit)	
Street	City	State	Zip
Name	E-mail	Phone (10 digit)	
Street	City	State	Zip
Name	E-mail	Phone (10 digit)	
Street	City	State	Zip
Name	E-mail	Phone (10 digit)	
Street	City	State	Zip