



The Peace Alliance
Campaign to Establish a
U.S. Department of Peace

Peace is not the absence of conflict; it is the ability to handle conflict by peaceful means.
--Ronald Reagan

THERE IS currently a bill before the U.S. House of Representatives (H.R. 808) to establish a United States Department of Peace. This historic measure will augment our current problem-solving options, providing practical, nonviolent solutions to the problems of domestic and international conflict.

During the 20th Century, more than 100 million people lost their lives to war—most of whom were non-combatants. Now, nearly a decade into the 21st Century, we see no strong evidence to indicate the future will be different. From the growing rate of domestic incarceration to increasing problems of international violence, the United States has no problem more serious than the problem of violence. Consider just a few sobering statistics:

- A World Health Organization report estimated the cost of interpersonal violence in the U.S. at \$300 billion per year—excluding war-related costs. The cost to victims was estimated at more than \$500 billion per year.¹
- U.S. youth homicide rates are more than 10 times that of other leading industrial nations.²
- Direct expenditures for corrections (e.g., prison) by local, state and federal governments between 1982 and 2004 increased 585 percent to \$62 billion per year.³
- In 2006, worldwide terrorist incidents increased 25 percent to 14,000, and resulting deaths increased 40 percent to 20,000 persons.⁴

While significant efforts are being made at all levels of society to address these issues, nowhere in the highest echelons of our government is there a platform from which to launch a focused, strategic approach to reducing and preventing violence. We place little institutional heft behind efforts to address the root causes of violence, and instead react to its symptoms, placing more demands on our already over-burdened police and military.

Countless peacebuilders and peacebuilding programs exist throughout the United States and the world. Those skilled in reducing and preventing violence—from conflict resolution experts to nonviolent communicators—have proven their effectiveness at treating and preventing the root causes of violence. Yet they remain under-funded and under-utilized.

From child abuse to genocide, from the murder of one to the slaughter of thousands, it is increasingly senseless for our country to merely wait until violence has erupted before addressing the deeper well from which it springs. **The time has come for a fresh approach—a national peacebuilding strategy coordinated, promoted and directed through a Department of Peace.**

Domestically, the Department of Peace will develop policies and allocate resources to effectively reduce the levels of domestic, school and gang violence, child abuse, and various other forms of societal discord. Internationally, the Department will advise the President and Congress on the most sophisticated ideas and techniques regarding peace-creation and conflict resolution among nations.

The problem of violence is a many layered one, and its solution will be, as well. While no one action—governmental or otherwise—will provide a single solution to such an entrenched and deeply rooted problem, we must treat the problem itself as an all-systems breakdown requiring an all-systems response.

The legislation will pass from bill to law under one condition: that a wave of citizen interest rise up from the American people and make itself heard in the halls of Congress. The Peace Alliance and Student Peace Alliance work together to educate and inspire thousands throughout the country with the knowledge, skill and enthusiasm to become powerful citizen activists in support of this effort. The Department of Peace campaign has citizen organizers working in over 240 Congressional Districts and supporters in all 50 states. Please visit our website to learn more and to find out how you can help.

Join the effort. Create a Department of Peace.

¹ World Health Organization, *The Economic Dimensions of Interpersonal Violence*, 2004

² World Health Organization, *World Report on Violence and Health*, 2002

³ Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Direct Expenditures by Criminal Justice Function, 1982-2004*

⁴ National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), *Report on Terrorist Incidents, 2006*, 30 April, 2007

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