



## *Legislation to create a* **U.S. Department of Peace**

### **The Need**

- ❑ Looking at current events in our nation and around the world, it is apparent that this is a very serious moment in history.
  - From school shootings and bullying to car bombings, from domestic violence and rape to gang violence, from terrorist attacks to the more than 20 major armed conflicts currently raging around the globe, there is clearly a need for significant improvement in our ability to live and work and thrive together. The time has come to implement a national and global peacebuilding strategy.
  - A recent World Health Organization report estimated the cost of interpersonal violence in the U.S. at \$300 billion a year. This is excluding war related costs.
  - In the U.S., youth homicide rates are more than **10 times** that of other leading industrialized nations, on par with the rates in developing countries and those experiencing rapid social and economic changes.
- ❑ While there is a wealth of genius in our nation to deal with these crucial issues, the best thinking of the American people in regards to violence prevention is not currently reflected in our national and local policies.
- ❑ President Bush himself has wisely called for a “**Best Practices Approach**” for dealing with school violence – that is precisely what the Department of Peace offers: available, proven methods for reducing and preventing violence in all of its forms.
- ❑ The Department of Peace will give those with peacebuilding expertise an institutional platform, and provide them the necessary resources to maximize their effectiveness.

### **What the Bill Does**

- ❑ *Summary*
  - The Department of Peace legislation calls for:
    - ◆ A Secretary of Peace, who will advise the president on peacebuilding needs, strategies, and tactics for use domestically and internationally.
    - ◆ The creation of a Peace Academy, a sister organization to our military service academies, which will build a world-class faculty of peacebuilding experts. They will analyze peacebuilding strategies at the highest level, advise other branches of government, and facilitate the training of peacebuilders for domestic and international service.
    - ◆ Funding to create and expand proven domestic peacebuilding programs in our communities, such as mediation trainings for police, firefighters, and other

emergency services personnel; alternative dispute resolution techniques, peer mediation and nonviolent communication programs in public schools, etc.

- ◆ Providing ways to meaningfully prevent conditions of conflict before violence erupts.
- ◆ The institutional platform necessary to successfully apply American genius to dramatically alleviate our national and global epidemic of violence.

□ *Domestic*

- The field of peacebuilding is a great American asset, deserving of far greater investigation and exploitation.
- Peacebuilding tools such as those described in the legislation have grown dramatically over the past 20 years.
  - ◆ More than 300 colleges and universities give degrees in Peacebuilding and Peace Studies. Two examples are Notre Dame's Peace Studies Masters program and the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University.
- The current spectrum of our peacebuilding expertise includes leading edge technologies in the fields of conflict resolution, peer mediation, post-conflict reconstruction and many others.
  - ◆ The Department of Peace will help train our best minds in the peacebuilding realm with the most sophisticated information, creating a body of expertise to deal with a broad array of issues spanning the spectrum, from school shootings, to urban gang violence, to child and elderly abuse, to the growing levels of incarceration—all problems which demand serious community solutions.
  - ◆ There exists today a vast array of problem-solving options at every level of our culture.
    - Many of these solutions are already working at a smaller scale in cities and states throughout the country. Current successful programs offer practical ways of improving community/police relations, rehabilitating prisoners, reducing recidivism rates, preventing domestic violence, providing cultural competency education, teaching nonviolent conflict resolution, and preventing school violence. All provide a valuable pool of tried and true methodologies.
  - ◆ Through the springboard of the Department of Peace, effective citizen and community-based programs will be identified, funded, expanded, and made available to communities around the country.
    - One example of the positive impact of these kinds of alternative approaches is in the field of Restorative Justice. Baltimore's "Community Conferencing" program reduces recidivism rates (return to the criminal justice system) by 60% in young offenders compared to similar juvenile justice cases in the traditional juvenile justice system.
    - We can teach our children positive socialization skills and tendencies – "preemptive education" in how to both manage and prevent conflict. Imagine K-12 core school curriculum integrating peer mediation and conflict prevention education.
- A US Department of Peace will significantly increase our ability to ensure that proven programs such as these are adequately funded and universally available. It will provide the institutional heft to increase and expand the breadth of their impact, offering practical, concrete, and effective solutions to our most pressing problems.

## □ *International*

- The Secretary of Peace will advise and inform the President on matters of international conflict. If we are to adequately address and prevent conflict around the globe, peacebuilding experts need a seat at the table of power.
- For example: Terrorism is a very real and serious threat, without question. Many are working to prevent the next terrorist attack, yet, who is working to prevent the root cause of terrorism? We must tap into the extraordinary wealth and breadth of knowledge and expertise in the peacebuilding community, those who have a deep understanding of the psychology of terrorism and its root causes, and put their expertise to bear on these crucial issues.
- We have the best military technologies in the world; what we are missing and what needs to be augmented are educational, humanitarian, and psychological technologies. The focus should be on developing deeper understanding of cultural and religious differences.
- In Iraq, we knew how to destroy militarily the structures we opposed, however we did not know how to proactively create harmonious civil society in the aftermath of shock and awe. We have been tragically lacking in war-to-peace transition planning and expertise. A Department of Peace would provide this.
- The Department of Peace would provide the military with a far larger array of options on the ground with which to build civil society, helping soldiers remain safe and effective while faced with potential violence.

## Questions and Answers

### □ “Doesn’t the ‘Peace Institute’ already do much of this?”

- The US Institute of Peace is a positive resource, however:
  - ◆ It is a much less hands on resource than a Department of Peace would be.
  - ◆ Only a cabinet-level position will provide the peacebuilding community with true institutional heft.
  - ◆ Its current focus is predominately international, while much of our peacebuilding needs are domestic.

### □ “What about the State Department?”

- The Secretary of Peace would often be in close cooperation with the Secretary of State, but the State Department only works internationally, and only with heads of state. The Department of Peace would:
  - ◆ Work internationally with various ethnic and religious sub-groups within other countries, and
  - ◆ Work domestically to promote peace in our homes, schools, towns and cities – as well as around the world

Learn more at [www.thepeacealliance.org](http://www.thepeacealliance.org)