

Is there A Need For A U.S. Department of Peace?

From school shootings to domestic and gang violence, from terrorist attacks to the 20+ major armed conflicts around the globe, there is clearly an urgent need for improvement in our ability to live together. A recent World Health Organization report estimated the cost of interpersonal violence in the U.S. at \$300 billion a year. This does not include war related costs.

While there is a wealth of genius in our nation to deal with these issues, the best thinking of our people on violence prevention is not reflected in our national and local policies. The Department of Peace, operating at the cabinet level, would offer proven methods for reducing and preventing violence in all of its forms. The Department of Peace will provide those with peace building expertise the necessary resources to maximize their effectiveness. The time has come to change what we do, so we can change the results. The time has come to implement a national and global peace building strategy.

What the Bill Does

The Department of Peace legislation (HR 808) calls for:

- ◆ A cabinet level Department, an institutional platform to address and alleviate national and global violence;
- ◆ A Secretary of Peace, who will advise the president on peace building needs, strategies, and tactics, both domestic and international;
- ◆ A Peace Academy, with a world-class faculty of peace building experts;
- ◆ Funds to create and expand proven programs in our communities;
- ◆ The development of ways to prevent and reduce conditions of conflict.

Domestic

- ◆ The Department of Peace will train our best minds, creating a body of expertise to deal with an array of issues surrounding violence.
- ◆ Currently, more than 300 colleges and universities give degrees in Peace building and Peace Studies. They teach leading edge technologies in conflict resolution, peer mediation, and post-conflict reconstruction.
- ◆ Through the Department, effective programs will be identified, funded, expanded, and provided to communities throughout the nation.

International

- ◆ The Department of Peace will provide the military with a large array of options with which to build civil society, so that soldiers remain safe and effective while facing potential violence.
- ◆ The Secretary of Peace will advise the President on matters of international conflict; peace experts will sit at the table of power.
- ◆ Expertise will be brought to bear on the psychology of terrorism and its root causes, crucial in today's world.



SHOULD THE U.S. ESTABLISH A DEPARTMENT OF PEACE AND NONVIOLENCE?

LWV OF WHEATON, IL

INVITES YOU TO A CAUCUS

**LEARN ABOUT THIS INTERESTING QUESTION
AND OUR PROPOSAL
FOR A NATIONAL STUDY**

***PLEASE JOIN US ON
SATURDAY, JUNE 14, 10 AM - NOON
IN THE SENATE SUITE, THIRD FLOOR***

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

**CONTACT STUDY LEADER
FRANKGOETZ@COMCAST.NET
OR CALL HIS CELL
630- 815-7668**

**OR VISIT US AT
WWW.WHEATONLWVIL.ORG**

Proposal:

The Wheaton, Illinois Chapter of the League of Women Voters proposes a national study to consider the establishment of a U.S. Department of a Peace and Nonviolence.

Proposal Rationale:

Adoption of legislation such as the current bill, H.R. 808 (110th Congress), would create a cabinet level Secretary of Peace and create an Academy of Peace, as a sister organization to the United States Military Academy at West Point. With this structural change in our government, the root causes of both domestic and international conflicts would be addressed pro-actively using demonstrated effective best practices.

Background:

In the 21st Century, we must pursue peace actively, both domestically and internationally. Rather than responding after conflicts erupt into violence, we must apply the techniques of conflict resolution to reduce the risk of wars and to minimize violence against innocents: children, civilians, communities, tribes, and nations. Doing so will lead to more peaceful communities and nations, to an improved quality of life, and to enormous benefits in tax savings. The idea for the establishment of a U.S. Department of Peace and Nonviolence can be traced back to debates by the framers of the U.S. Constitution. An essay on the establishment of a peace office was written in 1792 by Dr. Benjamin Rush, a physician, educator, and signer of the Declaration of Independence. Additional information on this legislation and its history is available at www.ThePeaceAlliance.org.

Relationship to League Positions:

HR 808 appears to be in agreement with every related Public Position of the LWVUS:

- **International Relations** – Promote peace in an interdependent world by working cooperatively with other nations and strengthening international organizations.
- **Arms Control** – Reduce the risk of war through support of arms control measures.

- **Military Policy and Defense Spending** – Work to limit reliance on military force. Examine defense spending in the context of total national needs.
- **Violence Prevention** – Support violence prevention programs in all communities.
- **Gun Control** – Protect the health and safety of citizens through measures to limit the accessibility and to regulate the ownership of handguns and semi-automatic weapons by private citizens. Support regulation of firearms for consumer safety.
- **Death Penalty** – Support the abolition of the death penalty.
- **Early Intervention for Children at Risk** - Promote the well being, encourage the full development and ensure the safety of all children through prevention of child abuse and prevention of violence.

Potential Benefits for the USA

- Domestically, we expect a reduction in violence, which now costs us \$300 billion a year. There would be fewer gangs. We would require fewer prisons.
- Internationally, we expect fewer wars, which are extremely costly, and quicker restoration of law and order after any occupation.
- We expect to a better balance between the defense and the domestic and humanitarian budget needs in the future.
- The establishment of a Department of Peace and Nonviolence would demonstrate that the people of the United States make peacemaking a priority, both domestically and internationally.

Why Do This Study?

- The study could increase national discussion on all peace and nonviolence issues, and increase awareness of the League of Women Voters.
- The study provides an additional platform to promote LWV positions on International Relations, Arms Control, Military Policy and Defense Spending, Violence Prevention and Gun Control, the Death Penalty and Early Intervention for Children at Risk.