



ACTION ALERT

A U.S. Department of Peace

In February of this year Representative Dennis J. Kucinich stood on the floor of the House of Representatives to speak on behalf of House Resolution 808, which seeks to establish a U.S. Department of Peace and Nonviolence. He stated, “Citizens across the United States are now uniting in a great cause to establish a Department of Peace, seeking nothing less than the transformation of our society, to make non-violence an organizing principle, to make war archaic through creating a paradigm shift in our culture for human development, for economic and political justice for violence control.”^{vi} The origin of the idea can be traced to the days of George Washington.ⁱⁱ “Over the years, the idea of an official U.S. peace [office] continued to be advocated by a wide array of prominent Americans, including Woodrow Wilson, Jennings Randolph, and Everett Dirksen. In fact, from 1935 to 1976 over 140 bills were introduced in Congress to establish various peace-related departments, agencies, bureaus, and committees of Congress.”ⁱⁱⁱ The events of September 11th have delayed consideration of the most recent legislation, and a companion bill has not been introduced in the U.S. Senate. This spring, HR 808, was referred to the House Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education and the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Sixty-eight co-sponsors have signed-on, and an independent grassroots organization known as The Peace Alliance has actively organized chapters in 267 Congressional districts.

Congress established a U.S. Institute of Peace in 1981 to pursue peace-building initiatives and to promote conflict management and education, but the Institute lacks the visibility and authority of a cabinet level department. Advocates of the new legislative proposal note that without a platform within the structure of a national government, peace will not be given a policymaking priority.

One of the distinguishing features of the current Department of Peace proposal is its recognition that policies related to peace should take into consideration all “forms of societal discord”^{vii}

From child abuse to genocide, from the murder of one to the slaughter of thousands, it is increasingly senseless to merely wait until violence has erupted before addressing the deeper well from which it springs.

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 campaign to establish a U.S. Department of Peace is only one aspect of a fundamental response to the problem of violence, but it is critical. It represents an important collective effort, as American citizens, to do everything we possibly can to save the world for our children's children.

Throughout America, there are countless peace-builders and peace-building projects. Those skilled in ameliorating the effects of violence - from conflict resolution experts to nonviolent communicators - have proven their effectiveness at treating root causes of violence. Peace is more than the absence of war; it is a positive state of being predicated on the presence of a peaceful heart. The mission of the Peace Alliance is to move this realization from the margins of our political dialogue to its rightful, central place within our national understanding.^v *(Source: The Peace Alliance)*



UNITED METHODIST WOMEN'S ACTION NETWORK

Women's Division – General Board of Global Ministries
100 Maryland Avenue, NE Suite 530 – Washington, DC 20002
Tel. (202) 488-5660 * Fax (202) 488-5681

www.umwmission.org

Under the proposed bill, it is expected that the Secretary of Peace would work cooperatively with the Secretary of State. However the Peace Secretary would also have responsibility to pursue domestic peace-“in our homes, schools, towns and cities.”^{vi} This would entail working with local police departments, school boards, as well as local agencies overseeing shelters for victims of abuse. The legislation calling for the Department would:

- Provide violence prevention programs addressing domestic violence, gang violence, drug and alcohol related violence, and the like.
- Effectively treat and dismantle gang violence.
- Support our military with complementary approaches to ending violence.
- Make regular recommendations to the U.S. President for various arms reductions strategies.
- Establish a U.S. Peace Academy, which among other things would train international peace-keepers.
- Receive a timely mandatory advance consultation from the Secretaries of State, and of Defense, prior to any engagement of U.S. troops in any armed conflict with any other nation.
- Participate by the Secretary of Peace as a member of the National Security Council.^{vii}

Throughout the country city councils in 20 cities, including Atlanta, Georgia, San Francisco, California, Silver City, New Mexico, and Detroit Michigan, representing 7.4 million Americans have adopted resolutions supporting the intent of HR 808.^{viii} The national and local actions have become part of a global effort. In June 2006 *The Global Alliance for Ministries and Departments of Peace* convened the First World Peace Forum in Vancouver, Canada. Moderated by Marianne Williamson, Chair of The Peace Alliance USA, the gathering has become an annual event bringing together government and civil society representatives.



Visit The Peace Alliance website at www.thepeacealliance.org or call them at (202) 296-1187 to see if your representative has signed-on to support HR 808. If they are a co-sponsor, thank them and urge them to ask their colleagues in Congress to get on board as well.

Organize with others in your community to pass a city council resolution endorsing the creation of a Department of Peace. For more information on passing a city council resolution contact The Peace Alliance.

September 21 is the day declared by the United Nations General Assembly as the *International Day of Peace*. Plan a peace day in 2008 to commemorate and raise awareness of the ideals of peace among all peoples. Visit www.internationaldayofpeace.org/ngo.htm for more information.

For more information visit the Veterans for Peace website at <http://www.veteransforpeace.org/index.php> or the Mothers Acting Up website at <http://www.mothersactingup.org/>

Read *The Book of Resolutions 2004* #272 (p.692) Support for Development of U.S. Department of Peace

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ⁱ Campaign for a Department of Peace. <http://betterworld.net/peacedepartment/>

ⁱⁱ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Department_of_Peace

ⁱⁱⁱ United States Institute of Peace. <http://www.usip.org/aboutus/history/index.html>

^{iv} The Peace Alliance. www.thepeacealliance.org

^v The Peace Alliance. <http://www.thepeacealliance.org/content/view/76/68/>

^{vi} The Peace Alliance. www.thepeacealliance.org

^{vii} http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Department_of_Peace

^{viii} The Peace Alliance. www.thepeacealliance.org