



Nebraskans for Peace

Nebraska Report

There is no Peace without Justice

MARCH 2007

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WHY PEACE?

*Statement by United Methodist Bishop Ann B. Sherer
at the January 27 "Bring the Troops Home" Rally in Lincoln*

Why do we from many faith traditions and meaning systems gather here at the Capitol on this very cold Saturday morning? Why do we believe that we are called to be Peacemakers, to join with others in beating our swords into plowshares, to ask our leaders to use a different way in Iraq?

From my own tradition I am called by scripture and by our United Methodist Social Principles that state:

"We believe war is incompatible with the teaching and example of Christ. We therefore reject war as an instrument of national foreign policy, to be employed only as a last resort in the prevention of such evils as genocide, brutal suppression of human rights, and unprovoked international aggression. We

insist that the first moral duty of all nations is to resolve by peaceful means every dispute that arises between or among them, that human values must outweigh military claims as governments determine their priorities..."

By these criteria, it is my judgment that we must withdraw from Iraq. This conflict does not meet this standard. We are here on the steps of the Nebraska Capitol to share our conviction that this war in Iraq must be ended.

"We yearn for the day when there will be no more war and people will live together in peace and justice."

That time is not yet, but we work toward such a vision. In the meantime Christians differ as to whether war or a particular war is sometimes necessary, but we

agree that it is essential to support those women and men who put their lives on the line in service to their country, in military settings. We pray for them daily as we pray for all those caught in the terror of living in a war zone – Iraq, Afghanistan, and other places around the world. We offer our ministry to the military, to their families, and to those persons who are citizens of the lands where war is raging.

It is a judgment call, but many of us believe that the war in Iraq does not merit the continued loss of U.S. and Iraqi lives and urge our government to withdraw our troops. We are here on the steps of the Nebraska Capitol to ask our government to bring our troops home.

Fear has gripped us and our nation since 9/11 and we have lived and acted out of that

terrible fear. It is my prayer, my hope, that we can turn loose of our fear and trust God as we move into the future. We have nothing to fear because God holds the future. If we can loose some of our fear then we can participate in the peace-making, justice-creating that God longs to share with us. We can choose to see those who are different from us as interesting potential friends instead of enemies. We can return good for evil and break the cycle of violence. This war has not cured our fears or made us safer. We must turn loose of the war and look for another answer. With words of appreciation for all they have risked and given, we must bring our dearly loved Nebraska National Guard troops home instead of asking them to stay even longer. We must bring our brave soldiers out of harm's way. We must work with other

nations to establish another route toward peace and security for Iraqi citizens. The work will not be easy. It has its own risks. But we must have the courage to try another way. We are here on the steps of the Nebraska Capitol to ask our government to take a different path.

Jesus says in Matthew 5 as he shares his Sermon on the Mount. "Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called the children of God."

Let us take the risk of being peacemakers. Let us cooperate with other nations and discern a different way to approach the brokenness of Iraq. God of all the earth guide the people of this land, and of all nations, in the ways of justice and peace, remove from our minds all hatred, prejudice, fear and contempt that we may honor one another and serve the common good. Amen

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Nebraskans for Peace

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Quaker Lobbyist Coming to Nebraska to Report on Iran Visit

by Don Reeves

Joe Volk, Executive Secretary of the Quaker lobby, the Friends Committee on National Legislation, is part of a 13-member religious delegation visiting government and religious leaders in Iran as of *Nebraska Report* press time. Volk will report first-hand to Nebraskans in a series of meetings March 27–March 30. (See below for tentative schedule.)

The religious delegation's visit is by invitation from Iranian President Ahmadinejad, who met with a 50-member religious delegation during his visit to the United Nations last September. The delegation expects to visit with President Ahmadinejad during this return visit that was arranged by the Mennonite Central Committee, but includes United Methodists, Roman Catholics and Episcopalians, as well as Mennonites and Quakers.

In his February 22 daily report from Iran, Volk reported their meeting that day with the deputy foreign minister of Iran, who said this was the "first time a U.S. group—religious or otherwise—had met with Iranian officials in the foreign ministry since the Iranian Revolution in 1979."

Asked about Iran's nuclear program, the foreign minister said that Iran is developing nuclear power, but is prepared to suspend enrichment activities and negotiate with the international community to ensure that its nuclear program complies with international safeguards. But, he added, Iran will not comply with the UN Security Council demand to suspend its uranium enrichment program as a precondition to talks.

This report matches what Mohammed El Baradei, the head of the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), reported in announcing to the UN Security Council in mid-February, after years of inspections, that Iran has not complied with the UN Security Council resolution. Volk noted that "The UN Security Council will have to decide next steps, but I am impressed that El Baradei sees hopes for progress if both sides will come to the negotiations table. He has proposed a time-out, or simultaneous suspension of Iranian uranium enrichment and UN sanctions that could open up space for diplomatic negotiations."

Volk said that the religious delegation is not in Iran to negotiate—but that the delegation is "reaching out to encourage a dialogue between our two nations in hope of averting a war. We see an openness to negotiations here in Iran."

Volk continued, "The United States has not demonstrated a similar openness. In statements eerily familiar to the prelude to war in Iraq, the Bush Administration is warning that Iran may soon have nuclear weapons. But the Israeli intelligence agency, British intelligence and even the U.S. intelligence say Iran is years away from producing nuclear weapons, with still time to talk."

Volk will report personally and more fully on his Iran visit in meetings in Omaha, Lincoln, Hastings and either Grand Island or Kearney March 27–30. To request a Volk appearance before your group, call Don Reeves (308-946-5409) or Paul Olson (402-475-1318). Visit the NFP website after mid-March for final details on Volk's appearances.

Joe Volk's Tentative Speaking Schedule in Nebraska

- Tuesday March 27, 7:00 p.m. – Public Meeting, Kearney
- Wednesday March 28, 10:00 a.m. – Hastings College Chapel
(a Kearney event is still under consideration)
- Wednesday March 28, 7:00 p.m. – Public Meeting, Grand Island
- Thursday March 29, 4:00 p.m. – UNL Student Union, UNL NFP Chapter
- Thursday March 29, 7:30 p.m. – Trinity United Methodist Church, Lincoln
- Friday March 30 – Omaha: UNO, Creighton, media, Nelson, Hagel offices
- Friday March 30, 7:00 p.m. – Public Meeting, Omaha

BRING THE TROOPS HOME!

January 27 Protest Rocks Streets of Lincoln

by Mark Weddleton
Coalition for Peace

On January 27 hundreds of voices rocked the streets of Lincoln chanting, "1, 2, 3, 4 – We march for peace, not for war; 5, 6, 7, 8 – Nebraska says, 'Don't escalate!'" and "U.S. out of Iraq, Bring the troops back!"

Media described the "Bring the Troops Home" protest as one of the largest the state has seen since the Vietnam era. The *Omaha World-Herald* put the crowd size at 500. Others estimated the turnout was even higher.

The day began with a 10:00 a.m. rally at the Capitol emceed by Coalition for Peace leader Melissa Illian. Peggy Lang, a U.S. Navy veteran from central Nebraska, provided music.

"Why do we gather here on the steps of the Capitol on this very cold Saturday morning?" asked Bishop Ann Sherer of the Nebraska United Methodist Conference. "To share our conviction that this war in Iraq must be ended. Jesus says, 'Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called the children of God.'"

Let us take the risk of being peacemakers."

Nebraska State Senator Bill Avery declared, "No one here today needs to be told that the Iraq War is a mistake. Almost everybody in the country seems to know this except the President. There is no military solution in Iraq. Now is the time to begin a withdrawal of American troops."

"What happens when supporting the constitution and supporting the President comes into a state of contradiction?" said Michael Morris, a sergeant in the Army Reserves, to explain his decision to not participate in the military anymore. He told the crowd, "Thousands upon thousands of innocent human beings have been slaughtered, resulting in an immoral war."

UNL professor Jeannette Jones explained, "I honor those black men like my great uncle, grandfather, and uncle who served their country. But I do not honor the U.S. policies that sent black men to fight foreign wars in foreign lands in WWI and WWII, and treated them like dogs when they

returned. I do not honor foreign policies that fostered the quagmire of Vietnam and sent men like my uncle home broken and crazy.

"I do not honor policies that now send American men and women to Iraq and Afghanistan, telling these brave soldiers that the Muslims hate them—when in reality they hate American foreign policy."

"If you came to this rally expecting that you could participate in this, then go home and feel like your job was done, you came to the wrong place."

– Josh Cramer

Fired up with determination, the crowd then headed down Centennial Mall in an old-fashioned protest march. This was a noisy but family-friendly event, with banners waving and homemade placards held high.

"More troops mean more death. No to the 'surge'," the marchers shouted. "Hey, hey, ho, ho—The occupation has got to

go!" With the beat of drummers from Boom Chicka leading the way they roared, "Hands off Iran—War is not the answer!"

After circling around the Federal Building the marchers assembled again in a culminating rally.

Lindsay Graef, a Lincoln East student and a leader of the growing number of high school stu-

weigh the option of visiting a hospital for medical care, or paying rent and buying groceries for the month," declared military veteran Walter McDowell III.

"If you came to this rally expecting that you could participate in this, then go home and feel like your job was done, you came to the wrong place," declared Josh Cramer to cheers. Cramer explained that the Coalition for Peace has an ambitious schedule of peace activities in the works. (See article on page 4.)

Slam poet Dominique Garay ended the day with a dynamic performance. You can read his poem "Starry Night" and the complete text of all the rally speeches online at www.fmclincn.org/Coalition_for_Peace.htm.

The action in Lincoln and a rally later in the day in Omaha received extensive media attention in the newspapers, radio and TV both before and after the events.

The Lincoln event was held in support of the United for Peace and Justice protest in Washington, D.C. which drew three to five hundred thousand peace activists.

Dizzying Month of Anti-War Action in Nebraska

The "Bring the Troops Home" march and rally was the culmination of a month-long surge of activity against the U.S. occupation of Iraq. The whirlwind of protest began on New Year's Day with a candlelight vigil of more than 100 people. This was the day following the death of the 3,000th U.S. serviceperson in Iraq. Despite icy streets they gathered to mourn the loss of life among both Iraqis and Americans.

On January 10, almost 90 people came out for the Coalition for Peace's weekly peace vigil at the Federal Building. This expanded presence was a 'pre-emptive strike' to say "No!" to the escalation of the Iraq conflict President Bush was to announce later in the evening. The following evening almost as many people withstood bitter winds at the Federal Building in a MoveOn-sponsored vigil in coordination with hundreds held in other cities.

Three days later the Unitarian Church So-

cial Action Committee put on a showing of "The Ground Truth." Thirty-five people attended the screening of this anti-war film that features disenchanted U.S. veterans of the Iraq War sharing their personal struggle to deal with what they did and what they experienced there. Peace activists joined in the youth march and rally honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on January 15. A receptive crowd took hundreds of flyers for the "Bring the Troops Home" protest. Also that day four Lincoln pastors met with Rep. Jeff Fortenberry on behalf of the Coalition for Peace. Members of the group included, Michelle Reed from Southminster United Methodist; Rebecca Brown, East Lincoln Christian; Brent Johnston, First Presbyterian; and David Orr, First Mennonite.

A week later supporters of MoveOn met with two staff members from Rep. Fortenberry's office on January 22. They left over 100 pho-

tographs of individual people from this district holding up signs that said "Out of Iraq" and other slogans.

Later that day poets and others assembled at the Crescent Moon Coffeehouse in Lincoln's Haymarket district for an Open Reading for Peace. The following night there was a showing of the documentary about war profiteering, "Iraq for Sale." The event at First Plymouth Church attracted about 25 people.

Challenging those who say student anti-war activism is dead, 75 Nebraska Wesleyan students gathered for an anti-war sit-in on campus on January 23. The UNL chapter of Nebraskans for Peace staffed informational tables throughout the week to build the January 27 Bring the Troops Home protest. Students from East, Lincoln and other high schools posted and handed out flyers at their

schools. High school activists have become regular participants in the weekly antiwar vigils at the Federal Building and Coalition for Peace meetings.

Members of MoveOn gathered at the Federal Building on January 24 to present Senator Hagel's office with almost 900 names and addresses of people who signed up to show support for his stand against President Bush's war policy in Iraq. UNL Nebraskans for Peace and the Mary Riepma Ross Film Theater jointly sponsored a "Bring the Troops Home" Film Festival on January 25. The films "Uncovered: The War on Iraq" and "The Ground Truth" each attracted an audience of about 75 people. Many people attending the screenings wrote letters to their elected officials protesting the escalation of the Iraq occupation.

— Mark Weddleton

STRATCOM

Already Planning Pre-emptive Strike on Iran

The following article by Nebraskans for Peace State Coordinator Tim Rinne appeared in the Wednesday, February 21, 2007, Lincoln Journal Star.

In an unprecedented collaboration, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Law and U.S. Strategic Command are hosting a "Space and Telecom Law Conference" in Lincoln on March 2. StratCom Commander and Marine Gen. James "Hoss" Cartwright will deliver the opening speech at this event, slated to address the military, commercial and tourism dimensions of "Security and Risk Management in a New Space Era."

But here's what he probably won't be telling this law school audience. That StratCom—at the behest of the Bush/Cheney Administration—has already devised plans for a pre-emptive (and, under international law, illegal) attack on Iran. As the March 2007 issue of *Vanity Fair* reports, "Another serious development is the growing role of the U.S. Strategic Command (StratCom), which oversees nuclear weapons, missile defense and protection against weapons of mass destruction. Bush has directed StratCom to draw up plans for a massive strike against Iran... 'Shifting to StratCom indicates that they are talking about a really punishing air-force and naval air attack [on Iran],' says [retired Col. W. Patrick Lang, who served as an officer for the Middle East, South Asia, and terrorism at the Defense Intelligence Agency]."

Imagine for a moment how this must look to the Muslim world... The command center for the largest nuclear arsenal in the world has been charged with planning, launching and coordinating an unprovoked assault on a non-nuclear Muslim nation, in order to keep that country from even being able to develop nuclear energy for civilian purposes. StratCom's attack plan even includes the use of tactical nuclear weapons to take out the reinforced bunkers housing Iran's nuclear research facilities.

The Islamic broadcast network, Al Jazeera, could have a field day with this sort of 'double standard': The U.S. gets to have all the nuclear armaments it wants (including a proposed new generation of nuclear weapons—the 'bunker-buster'



grap
Justin Kemerling

mini-nuke and the Reliable Replacement Warhead), to use however it sees fit. And under the "Bush Doctrine" of pre-emption, the U.S. even has the prerogative to offensively use nuclear weapons to prevent 'wannabe' states from 'going nuclear.' But Iran is to be prohibited from developing nuclear power, for fear it might someday make a bomb.

This kind of hypocrisy is guaranteed to feed anti-American feeling in the Mideast, and lend credence to Russian President Putin's charge that it is in fact we who are the nuclear threat to the world.

Timely as the topic is, though, I'm guessing Commander Cartwright isn't going to say much at this 'law' conference about StratCom's plan to attack Iran.

Nor do I imagine that he'll dwell on the military- and space-based assistance StratCom provided in the "Shock and

Awe" bombing campaign on Iraq (an assault which former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan described as a flat-out violation of international law). The efforts of StratCom's Space Command in that aerial blitzkrieg inspired then-Air Force Secretary James Roche to describe the 2003 attack as "the first true space war."

I further doubt that the commander will care to get into the legalities of StratCom's new mission of "Full Spectrum Global Strike"—a hi-tech version of 'shoot first, ask questions later,' whereby the Omaha command center is authorized to attack a target anywhere on earth in two hours, with conventional or nuclear weapons, if a threat to America's national security is suspected.

And I'm guessing most Nebraskans are unaware that the now-infamous "warrantless wiretap" program conducted by the National Security Agency was a StratCom-sponsored project. But you'll be relieved to know that the man who launched this illegal spying operation, Gen. Michael Hayden, is no longer a "component commander" at StratCom. He's the new director of the CIA.

I haven't even touched on the civil liberties issues regarding the use of StratCom's satellite network to spy on people from space, the legality of its efforts to 'militarize' and 'weaponize' space, or its stated goal of U.S. space dominance to the exclusion of all others—all subjects, one would assume, worthy of consideration at a conference claiming to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the "Outer Space Treaty"

StratCom is more than just a scofflaw—it's becoming a law unto itself. And yet, far as I can determine, none of these topics are on the March 2 conference program.

I've already paid my \$100 registration fee for the conference, and the morning of March 2, I'll be on the 'inside' to hear for myself what Commander Cartwright has to say about the command's current activities. But I would hope there will be a bunch of us on the 'outside' protesting StratCom's role in the impending attack on Iran. And while they're at it, sending a message to the UNL College of Law that rubbing shoulders with a command center that habitually flouts rule of law hardly falls within the college's academic mission.

March 17 Protest

To Commemorate 4th Anniversary of the War

Peace protests nowadays are greeted with overwhelming enthusiasm from passersby, with supportive honks, peace fingers and thumbs up. And yet, the occupation of Iraq is being deepened, the U.S. has been bombing Somalia and threats against Iran are increasing. So the antiwar organizing will continue, too.

The highlight will be a protest to commemorate the four-year anniversary of the invasion of Iraq. Under the theme "Listen to the People Now! Bring the Troops Home!" the mass gathering will take place on Saturday, March 17 at 1:00 p.m. on Centennial Mall just north of the Federal Building at 15th and P Streets in Lincoln.

Other upcoming Lincoln peace activities include:

Every Wednesday—in rain or shine, heat or cold until the troops come home—there's a vigil for peace held at the Federal Building, 15th and O Streets in downtown Lincoln, from 5:00 to 6:00 p.m.

The continuation of the "Bring the Troops Home" Film Series will be on the evening of March 10. A Peace Music Festival is also planned.

Local clergy are organizing an interfaith service at First Presbyterian Church on March 20. If you are interested in joining this Clergy Peacemakers group, contact pastor David Orr at david@FMCLincoln.org or 402-467-1526.

The Coalition for Peace is also arranging showings of the documentary "The Ground Truth" on campuses, at churches, and in the community. For details on these and other peace activities, including campus events—and how you can join in—visit www.fmclincoln.org/Coalition_for_Peace.htm or contact the Coalition for Peace at 402-499-6672.

— Mark Weddleton

What's HOT in Global Warming?

by Professor Bruce E. Johansen

Bruce E. Johansen is Frederick W. Kayser Professor of Communications at UNO and author of the three-volume Global Warming in the 21st Century (Praeger 2006).

When I was first invited to write about global warming for Nebraskans for Peace a few months ago, a thought struck me. When the biggest threat to the human race was nuclear war, something had to be done to consummate the disaster—a fit of international anger, a button pushed, missiles sent on their way. The scariest thing about global warming is that all we have to do to destroy the world that nurtures us is carry on business as usual.

The onset of such an apocalypse may even be pleasant at times, as with a collection of bright, dry, mild winter days. The end of our climatic world may not even be notable for its nasty storms as much as utter boredom, as the fingers of intensifying drought wrap around us. “Nice day,” is a phrase I have heard a lot during these days of Nebraska winters that seem to have evolved into long thaws punctuated by short freezes.

Some of us are old enough to remember local winters that began in November and ended in April, broken only by occasional (and sometimes dramatic) mid-winter thaws. So who will begrudge us long strings of mild, dry winter days with warnings that this is only the

beginning of a natural catalogue of weather weirdness that will turn the natural world on its head, and of feedback loops that will accelerate warmth beyond the survival tolerance of many plants and animals? One might as well save the climatic sermon for especially hot and humid summer afternoons, with the caveat that, well, weather happens, especially in Nebraska.

bank account drawing an environmentally dangerous form of compound interest. Evidence is accumulating that these processes already have begun. Parts of the Trans-Siberian Railway's track has twisted and sunk due to melting of permafrost, causing delays of service of several days at a time. Scientists in Siberia report methane and carbon dioxide bubbling out

intense eruptions. An explosive rise in temperatures on the order of about 8 degrees C. during a few thousand years accompanied a methane release 55 million years ago, called the Palaeocene/Eocene Thermal Maximum. The “methane” burp will not be tomorrow's news, but climate scientists pay attention to such things because rising greenhouse-gas emissions could

idly now, at the pace of our human-made forcings, tempered a few decades by the oceans' thermal response time.” Hansen hastened to tell his audience of scientists that he was speaking as a private citizen under the protection of the First Amendment. In his official capacity as director of the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Science in New York City, Hansen often has been forbidden to disseminate his findings by the Bush White House, where the usual line on the future is, as Bush himself once told Bob Woodward: Who cares about the future? We'll all be dead then. Hansen added: “The semi-arid part of the United States, stretching from West Texas through Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, and the Dakotas is likely to have more extensive droughts and be less suitable for agriculture.” (The droughts also may intensify as the Ogallala aquifer is depleted.) This is the ultimate destination on a journey that begins with all those “nice day, eh?” winter salutations.

Read papers and articles by James E. Hansen at: [<http://www.columbia.edu/~jeh1/>].

The Lessons of Mild Winter Nights

The problem with this line of reasoning is that the most dramatic warming is taking place during the coldest periods—that is, winter nights, here, as well as in the Arctic, where cold-season warming is much more dramatic, and dangerous.

Many climate scientists believe that the middle of the twenty-first century will witness dramatic acceleration in global warming. Various feedback loops are expected to accelerate increases in atmospheric greenhouse-gas levels and, consequently, worldwide temperatures. These include several natural processes that add greenhouse gases to the atmosphere, such as melting permafrost in the Arctic and eventual gasification of solid methane deposits (clathrates) in the oceans. These compound existing problems like a

of melting permafrost that refuses to freeze even during colder seasons. The danger, according to many people who are familiar with the paleoclimatic record is: once this journey has begun in earnest, any return trip may become a matter of many centuries as well as copious human pain and suffering. Sir John Houghton, one of the world's leading experts on global warming, told the UK *Independent*: “We are getting almost to the point of irreversible meltdown, and will pass it soon if we are not careful.”

The ultimate feedback is the so-called “methane burp,” in which solid methane in the oceans turns to gas in the atmosphere, breaks down into carbon dioxide, and accelerates greenhouse warming. During past periods of rapid warming, methane in gaseous form has been released from the seafloor in

being taking us down a similar path. James Hansen believes that a 2 degree C. worldwide temperature increase could “whipsaw” the Earth into a climate regime, via feedbacks, that would constitute “a different planet.” At that point, increases in greenhouse gases would engage a self-perpetuating feedback loop that cannot be stopped. “We live on a planet whose climate is dominated by positive feedbacks, which are capable of taking us to dramatically different conditions.”

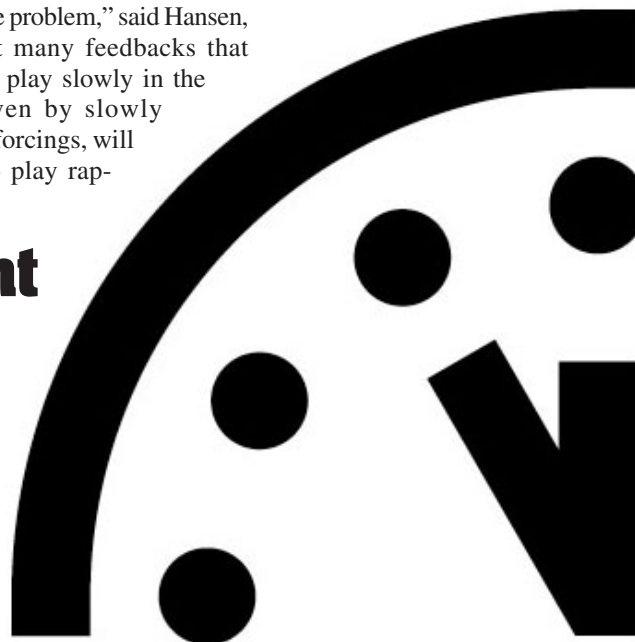
Hansen told the American Geophysical Union's annual meeting in San Francisco December 14, 2006. “The problem,” said Hansen, is “is that many feedbacks that came into play slowly in the past, driven by slowly changing forcings, will come into play rap-

'Doomsday Clock' Creeps Closer to Midnight

The ‘Doomsday Clock,’ the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists' legendary symbol of the threat of nuclear holocaust, was moved forward from seven to five minutes before midnight at a news conference January 17. But tightened international tensions over Iran's and North Korea's nuclear programs and the Bush/Cheney Administration's aggressive nuclear policies were not the only motivation for moving the clock two minutes closer to midnight.

For the first time in its 60-year-history, the internationally acclaimed organization factored in the imminent danger of Global Warming, stating, “The dangers posed by climate change are nearly as dire as those posed by nuclear weapons. The effects may be less dramatic in the short term than the destruction that could be wrought by nuclear explosions, but over the next three to four decades climate change could cause irremediable harm to the habitats upon which human societies depend for survival.”

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Three More Voices A

1 State Senator Bill Avery

No one here today needs to be told that the Iraq War is a mistake. Almost everybody in the country seems to know this except the President. The War is a major blunder. The ordinary definition of blunder is “a gross error usually resulting from ignorance, stupidity, or carelessness.” I believe this war came about because of careless and reckless disregard for time-tested rules of behavior that have guided U.S. foreign policy for the past 60 years.

1. Rule-based foreign policy (adhering to international law that rejects pre-emptive war unless one is under imminent threat);
2. Consensus building (working with other countries to build a winning coalition);
3. Respect for multilateral institutions (working with the UN and within its rules to achieve legitimacy for our actions).

The Bush Administration callously abandoned all three of these traditional pillars of American foreign policy.

Let me explain:

1. Rule-based behavior was tossed aside when we adopted a policy of pre-emptive war that has no bases in international law. International law is very clear about lawful pre-emption. It is only lawful when the threat is so grave and imminent that the threat can only be thwarted by force.
2. American tradition of consensus building was tossed aside when the President basically said to the world: “You’re either with us or against us.” Instead

of working to persuade countries by convincing them of the rightness of his policy, he bullied with tough talk and threats.

3. Probably the most serious error was the President’s rejection of a multilateral approach to Iraq. He has surrounded himself with a group of advisors who believe that ‘might makes right’ and that the U.S. has the might and that we ought to use it to shape the world as we choose. These advisors have nothing but contempt for the UN, seeing it as a cumbersome obstacle to America’s ability to ‘go it alone.’ They see the UN and multilateralism as a ‘liberal illusion,’ a mere nuisance. Therefore, they seek not merely to get around the UN, but to undermine its work, to set it up for failure, and to reduce its activity to handing out rice to refugees and other charitable assignments.

Important matters, like war and peace, must be decided in Washington, where the real power resides. The worldview of the President and his advisors is that legitimacy comes from power, and not law, consensus building or multilateralism.

This view of the world is wrong-headed and reckless and is what led us into this disastrous war. We have sacrificed thousands of young lives and have spent billions of dollars on what even the President’s own supporters now admit was a mistake. The President insists on “staying the course,” while ignoring the advice of the Baker-Hamilton Commission, which contends that the current path is



the wrong path.

Public support for the war at home is evaporating. Congressional support is ebbing away. Members of the “coalition of the willing” are withdrawing their troops from Iraq.

Members of the President’s own party are speaking out in opposition. Our own Senator Hagel has become one of the most outspoken and respected critics of the war. He is absolutely right: There is no military solution in Iraq. Now is the time to begin a withdrawal of American troops. The policy is wrong. It was wrong from the beginning. And we should admit our mistake, cut our losses and bring our troops home.

Some people may question your patriotism and mine because we are here. This is a good time to reflect on the real meaning of patriotism. Some will tell you that you must support the President on the war to be truly patriotic. But the true patriot respects the permanent right of each citizen to express their own viewpoints... without fear of censure and free from intimidation.

We must never define patriotism as blind attachment to country or unquestioning support for its policies. Patriotism means passionate and complete support for the institutions and values that make our country great. It is certainly patriotic to support a strong military

and the men and women who risk their lives to protect us. But it is equally patriotic to believe that a strong military should be tempered with prudent restraint in its use.

I believe patriotism also means providing affordable health care for every citizen in this country. I believe further that patriotism is guaranteeing every child a proper education. It’s patriotic to support the union family and every worker’s right to decent wages and a safe work place. It’s patriotic to support a clean environment. It’s patriotic to insist on justice and freedom from fear for our senior citizens. You’re patriotic when you demand equal rights for all, no matter their race, religion, national origin, and sexual orientation. So stand firm, because you are true patriots.

Thank you from giving me the opportunity to speak to you about this important subject and God bless you as you continue your work to bring peace.

2 UNLA Jeannette

What are we celebrating? What are we protesting?

I want to thank Josh [Cramer] and Ms. [Lela] Shanks for inviting me to speak at today’s event. As I am a black woman and historian, I hope you will permit me to tell you a story about how I came to this place where I am today—a place where I oppose not only the war in Iraq, but that in Afghanistan.

Last Veteran’s Day, I had the pleasure of meeting Retired Brigadier General Julia J. Cleckley. She was the first black woman to attain that rank in the National Guard. While I was honored to meet her as she represented everything that was progressive about the armed forces in terms of race and gender, I could not help feeling uneasy about celebrating her achievements as our nation waged war in Iraq. I spoke to one of my parents that evening and discussed my ambivalence about the meeting—only to be reminded that our family has not had a typically celebratory relationship with the U.S. military.

I remember meeting my grandfather’s brother, when I was young. He was the eldest of my great grandmother’s children and



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Asst. Professor Lette Jones

had served in WWI. Unlike his other brothers who were preachers and deacons, Uncle ____ had no use for church. I remember seeing him on his porch and asking whether or not he was coming to church and he said no. My grandpa later explained that he has lost his faith (“fell from the Lord”). I had no clue what he meant until I got older. You see, Uncle ____ did what so many black men did in the Great War—he ‘closed ranks’ and went to fight a foreign war, under a foreign flag, in a foreign land—on the promise that if he returned he would be afforded all the rights due him as a citizen of the United States. We all know the story, he never got those rights and he lost his faith.

I remember my grandfather (Daddy’s Dad) who died a broken, faithless man. A man who served during WWII and who also expected to come back to an America that would embrace him. He did not. Instead he turned to alcohol and died a broken man.

Last, there is my mother’s baby brother Uncle ____, who went to Vietnam like so many black men from the ghettos of Brooklyn. While there he saw and partook in things his mind couldn’t handle. I

remember sitting downstairs on the couch with my mother and two sisters, when Uncle ____, who had been staying with us came home. It was raining and thundering. He grabbed me and told me we had to go because “they” were coming. All I can remember was screaming and yelling—my sisters and I begging my mother to make him let me go—all the while, my mother calmly informed him that no one was coming. That was one of the most traumatic experiences in my life. All I could think was that he was CRAZY. Today, he is in a mental institution in New York and I will never really know him.

So, what do I celebrate? I honor those black men like my great

uncle, grandfather, and uncle who served their country even when drafted. But I do not honor the U.S. policies that sent black men to fight foreign wars in foreign lands (WWI and WWII), and treated them like dogs when they returned. I do not honor foreign policies that fostered the quagmire of Vietnam and sent men like my uncle home broken and crazy. I do not honor policies that now send American men and women to Iraq and Afghanistan, telling these brave soldiers that the Muslims hate them—when in reality they hate American foreign policy.

In closing, I have only one thing to say: Bring the troops home!

Thank You.

3 U.S. Navy Veteran Walter McDowell III

My name is Walter J. McDowell III and I was in the United States Navy from 1997 through 2001. I spoke three years ago at a similar event that was held in Antelope Park. I had more hair then and might have looked a little wilder than I do today. When Josh Cramer asked me a couple of weeks ago if I would speak here today, I had to take a couple of days to decide and try and figure out, what exactly I would say to you. I am by no means an expert on war; I am just one guy who happens to have been in the military at one point in his lifetime and this is only one point of view by a former enlisted man.

I grew up in North Lincoln, my old stomping grounds are just a stones throw from this very spot. I was educated in the Lincoln Public School system and I grew up in government subsidized housing. I say this, because I want to convey to you all that I am not some foreign entity in regard to this town. I have lived other places when I was older, but the large majority of my life existence was

spent right here, which means that my way of thinking was formed right here in this town.

When I started to think about this speech and when I think back to the speech that I gave three years ago, I seem to always fall back on why people join the military. My reasoning was that I was a poor kid with minimal job prospects out of high school and I wanted to go to college, but lacked the money to do so. So in 1997 I was approached by the Navy to join up and I got the same speech that thousands upon thousands of other people get in this country about learning valuable skills that will transfer over into civilian life and all the while earning money to go to college.

This worked out for me, but for thousands of others this has not. As of last night 3065 Americans have died in Iraq and 353 Americans have died in Afghanistan. This includes 32 Nebraskans who have lost their lives in Iraq and 2 Nebraskans who have lost their



lives in Afghanistan. The youngest being 19 years of age and the oldest being 35 years of age. Looking over the list, the overwhelming majority of these deaths were attributed to people in their twenties—people, Nebraskans, who are young enough to go overseas and die for decisions that our elected officials, but too young to hold office in those same positions.

I wonder what would possess a young person, with a whole long life ahead of them and a war going on to sign up, to be charmed by the likes of a recruiter in a snazzy uniform. I have heard that some people who do join are being offered enlistment bonuses in the range from fifteen to fifty thousand dollars. I wonder if the money is worth it, especially in a country that is supposed to be so prosperous. People are literally signing their lives away for what could be considered pocket change compared to what the corporations are making off the war.

Our country has spent over 361 billion dollars on the war in Iraq, with an estimated 2.7 billion of that coming from Nebraska. 2.7 Billion dollars. I have to wonder where this money is going and to what end will it stop. I have to wonder where our priorities lie.

For 2.7 billion dollars we Nebraskans could have received health care for 836,279 people or health care coverage for 1,114,387 children or 490,594 scholarships for university students. But our priorities as a country don’t lie with silly little things like education or health care, but maybe they should. If we can find 361 billion dollars to fund a war with no perceivable end in sight, why can’t we find money for basic things like food, shelter, education, and health care for Americans? As I see it, our priorities are not in the right place. We are fighting a war under the guise of national security, while people are going to bed hungry, while people do not have a decent roof over their heads, while people can not get access to decent educational systems, while people weigh the option of visiting a hospital for medical care, or paying rent and buying groceries for the month.

I don’t have all the answers and in reality I seem to have a good many more questions, which people don’t seem to want to answer. But maybe they should. I know that I am not the greatest speaker out here, but I appreciate all of you spending the time to listen to what I had to say here this morning.

Thank you.



NFP Background Paper on Illegal Immigration

by Christy Hargesheimer
NFP State Board Member

This paper makes an analysis of current immigration issues as a prelude to NFP's policy recommendations for national and state legislation, which are found at the end of the paper.

Illegal immigration has been a contentious issue ever since uninvited European immigrants seized Native American lands after 'illegally' migrating to this continent. After 1763, when King George III prohibited the claiming or settling of land west of the Appalachians, reserving it for Native Americans, George Washington illegally acquired large sections of this forbidden land. Ironically, when Washington later faced the problem of illegal squatters settling on this land, he went to court to have them evicted, because they had "not taken those necessary steps pointed out by the law" if they were to reside on the land.

Today, the immigration debate, often based on misinformation and half-truths, centers on new "squatters," those undocumented workers crossing the U.S. southern

One may well ask
"Why don't people
apply to come legally?"

The answer is,
"They can't."

border and coming into the heartland. According to the Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest, Nebraska is a new "Gateway State," one of the top ten states in the country for fastest-growing immigrant populations. Without that growth in immigration, Nebraska would have lost population over the last 16 years. The undocumented immigrant population in Nebraska grew from 6,000 in 1990 to 24,000 in 2000, a fourfold increase; it is estimated that the undocumented immigrant population in Nebraska today is between 33,000–55,000. Nationally, immigrants have accounted for one out of two new workers since 1995, and for 60 percent of the growth in the nation's labor force between 2000 and 2004. Of the 34 million foreign-born Americans (12 percent of our population), 30 percent, or approximately 12 million, are undocumented "illegals."

Context of the Issue

Of course, the existence of "illegals" means that current U.S. immigration laws are

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broken by millions of people. The present 20-year policy of enforcement-only strategies has not reduced illegal immigration; it has instead increased smuggling fees, the proliferation of fake documents, and hundreds of gruesome migrant deaths in the Arizona desert. The fact that there are an estimated 12 million immigrants in the U.S. without legal papers and around 300,000 more each year, is the result of insufficient immigrant visas available in relation to the demand for laborers and the need in Mexico and countries south for jobs that can support a person or family. Only 5,000 visas into the U.S. are available annually for non-skilled workers.

Why do people come here? The two main reasons are to work or to join family members already here. Since 2001, the number of student visas has decreased, but the implementation of NAFTA, with its lack of a policy to achieve social justice in the North American trade area, its lack of a provision to provide credit to family farms south of the border, and its license to corporate agriculture to do almost anything it wants, is responsible for the loss of many agricultural jobs in Mexico. The displaced farmers go north.

Border jobs in the maquiladoras are also being lost because the cheap labor border factories are relocating to China, where labor costs are even lower.

One may well ask "Why don't people apply to come legally?" The answer is, "They can't." The difficulty they have in obtaining a visa reflects an outdated system. People seeking family reunification, for example, can in some categories wait as long as 22 years before they can make application. Companies encourage cheap Mexican labor to come, whether it is legal or illegal. An "underground railroad" stands ready to smuggle people into the country. Entering the country illegally, or overstaying a temporary visa, seem the only options available to people not willing to wait. The availability of jobs in the U.S. appeals to those who cannot earn a living at home. A parent who needs to provide for his or her family does not want to wait in a decades-long line.

Undocumented Immigrants: Myths and Facts:

Randy Capps of The Urban Institute and Michael Fix of the Migration Policy Institute describe several current myths about undocumented immigrants, legal immigrants, and refugees, with which we should be conversant. Here are but a few (including two from other sources):

Myth #1: Undocumented immigrants come to the United States to get welfare.

Fact: Undocumented immigrants are ineli-

gible for welfare, food stamps, Medicaid, and most other public services. They may be treated in emergency rooms, but many avoid even that treatment for fear of discovery. Undocumented men come to the U.S. almost exclusively to work. Their 90 percent employment rate is higher than that for U.S. citizens or legal immigrants.

Myth #2: Undocumented immigrants all crossed the Mexican border.

Fact: Between 60 and 75 percent of the nearly 12 million undocumented immigrants entered illegally and without inspection at

of secondary children (grades 6-12) were undocumented.

Myth #6: Undocumented immigrants do not pay taxes.

Fact: Undocumented immigrants pay the same real estate taxes as American citizens do, usually as part of their rental payment. The majority of state and local costs of schooling and other services are funded by these taxes. Additionally, the U.S. Social Security Administration has estimated that three quarters of undocumented immigrants pay payroll taxes, and that they contribute



Immigration Rights Rally at the Nebraska State Capitol in April 2006.

other points of entry. Many of the other 25 to 40 percent entered legally and subsequently overstayed visas or otherwise violated the terms of their admission.

Myth #3: Undocumented immigrants are all single men.

Fact: Over 40 percent of undocumented adults are women, and the majority (54 percent) of undocumented men live in married couples or other families. Fewer than half of undocumented men are single and unattached.

Myth #4: Most children of the undocumented are unauthorized.

Fact: Two-thirds of all children with undocumented parents (about 3 million) are U.S.-born citizens who live in mixed-status families.

Myth #5: A large share of schoolchildren are undocumented.

Fact: Nationally in 2000, only 1.5 percent of elementary schoolchildren (enrolled in kindergarten through 5th grade) and 3 percent

\$6-7 billion in Social Security funds that they will be unable to claim. These taxes help keep Social Security solvent.

Myth #7: The Mexicans send all the money they earn back to Mexico, causing a drain on local economies.

Fact: In 2005, only ten percent of the money earned by Mexican immigrants was sent back to Mexico, and 90 percent was pumped back into the local economy. A study conducted by the Texas Comptroller showed that in 2005, undocumented immigrants contributed \$17.7 billion dollars to the Gross State Product, and that the cost of education, healthcare, and incarceration of undocumented immigrants was only \$1.2 billion.

Myth #8: Illegals are taking jobs away from Americans [sic].

Fact: They are actually providing essential services, often in dangerous jobs. For example, as many as half of the roughly 5,000 private firefighters based in the Pacific Northwest and contracted by state and fed-

conclusion on page 10

Governor's Tax Bill Favors Wealthy

by Mark Vasina
President, Nebraskans for Peace

This article is modified from testimony presented at a hearing in January before the Revenue Committee of the Nebraska Legislature. LB 331, the Governor's tax bill, would cut state income taxes—the largest cuts going to the highest income-earners—and entirely eliminate the estate tax. The testimony focused on the income tax cuts.

I am here today representing Nebraskans for Peace in opposition to LB 331 because this bill will only increase the injustice of our tax system.

With LB 331 the Governor is asking you to trade property tax relief—the top state economic policy priority among Nebraska voters—for income tax cuts designed to benefit the wealthy few. LB 331 income tax cuts will hamstring efforts by the Legislature to address the issue of property tax reform. For this reason, your vote on this bill represents a clear choice between the increasingly vocal concerns of the majority of your constituents and the wishes of the financially (and politically) powerful.

Portrayed by the Governor as a 'middle class' tax cut, this bill is

designed to provide huge tax cuts targeted at Nebraska's wealthiest residents. The *Lincoln Journal Star* published a powerful analysis of the proposed tax cut under the headline "Tax plan benefits wealthy, too" (January 27, 2007). While Nebraskans with incomes of \$25,000 will receive a tax cut of \$46, fully phased-in cuts to those with incomes over \$100,000 range from \$1,000 to \$9,000. The article points out that the "tax cut [of the top 10 percent] will be the most costly part of the proposal." In other words, most of the Governor's tax cuts will go to the wealthiest of Nebraskans.

I am sure I don't need to take time to explain what every economist and homeowner knows to be a simple fact—that income taxes are a progressive method of taxation while property taxes are regressive. Income taxes are borne proportionately by those with the means to pay taxes, while property taxes hit hardest on those of modest means.

This is why the majority of your constituents want you to tackle high property taxes as your legislative priority.

But there is a special interest group that wants you to do something at cross purposes with this popular agenda. Wealthy Nebraskans want you to focus on cutting their taxes. For these Nebraskans,

property taxes are not the bite they are for most Nebraskans. High income earners give up a proportionately bigger chunk of their incomes to income taxes. So you are being asked to place a priority on tax relief for them. Labeling this a 'middle class' tax cut is a tactic designed to obscure what is really going on here.

What do the opponents of legislative property tax reform say? *High property taxes are a local*

problem and state senators can't do anything about them. Not true. Ask Sen. Carol Hudkins or Sen. Deb Fischer or Sen. Tom White. These senators and others have introduced important legislation this year to address this issue.

Portrayed by the Governor as a 'middle class' tax cut, most of the tax cuts in his bill will go to the wealthiest of Nebraskans.

And most obviously, state senators can pass legislation which can effectively cripple any effective property tax reform.

LB 331 is one such piece of crippling legislation. It assures that property tax levy lids—established by the State Legislature—will remain high. It threatens future state budgets in times of fiscal difficulties, and will force other regressive taxation measures to cover deficits arising from cuts to income taxes.

What else do opponents of property tax reform say? *Requiring the state to pick up more costs funded by property taxes—such as public education—is merely a 'tax shift' disguised as tax reform.* I guess this means that if the legislature moves program payments from one revenue source to another nothing of value is accomplished—we are simply shifting the tax source.

However, this simplistic notion of 'tax shifts' misses (no doubt deliberately) the underlying economic reality. Different taxes hit different classes of taxpayers dif-

ferently. Moving program funding from reliance on one tax to another shifts the tax burden across taxpayer classes.

For example, shifting funding for public education away from property taxes and onto statewide taxes (a program begun in the early 1990s) shifts the burden of funding education away from homeowners with modest incomes, small businesses, farmers and ranchers—and onto higher income

earners with the ability to pay. This sort of tax shift has social and economic value. It provides economic relief to those Nebraskans who truly need it, assures strong financial support for public education, and strengthens our state economy along the way.

Nebraska taxpayers were in fact served a *real tax shift* last year in LB 968. That bill's modest income tax cuts for most Nebraskans were swept aside by the higher property taxes imposed by LB 968's continuation of school levy lids scheduled to be lowered. That legislation shifted the tax burden away from wealthy Nebraskans and onto the majority of Nebraskans with more modest means. (See "Professors on Property Taxes...Tax Revamp Needs Careful Study," in the Nov./Dec. 2006 *Nebraska Report*.)

LB 331 will continue this tax burden shift. Hardest hit of course will be retirees on fixed incomes, low-income homeowners (including first-time homeowners, who find it increasingly difficult to afford to make their purchases), farmers and ranchers.

Faced with widespread popular demands for property tax relief supported by rational 'Economics 101' analysis, proponents of tax

cuts which disproportionately benefit the wealthy have been forced to look elsewhere for their arguments. Unsurprisingly, they have turned to the argument now routinely advanced to support government tax policy favoring the wealthy and large corporations—*tax cuts benefiting the rich are needed for economic development.* You are being asked to accept on faith (and the testimony of lobbyists) that for a healthy state economy our tax policy must be amended to favor the wealthy.

Many economic studies on economic growth, however, suggest that attention to strong funding for infrastructure and education—and not lower state and local tax rates—is highly correlated with growth in state and local economies. (See, for example, Robert G. Lynch, *Rethinking Growth Strategies: How State and Local Taxes and Services Affect Economic Development*, Economic Policy Institute, 2004.) A strong state economy is best served by focusing on adequacy and equity in tax policy. The intent and consequences of LB 331 are the antithesis of sound tax policy.

The issue of appropriate tax policy deserves serious study. Demand real evidence to support the link between the tax cuts proposed in LB 331 and the desired outcome for economic strength—the kind of evidence you would demand if you paid for these policies yourselves. Don't just take the word of those who will clearly benefit. Seek out and engage objective professionals in your study.

Senators, I ask you to reject LB 331. Listen to the majority of your constituents on tax reform. If you can't pass legislation that tackles property tax reform this year, study it and come back next year to tackle it. And refrain from legislation such as this bill that will cripple your attempts to address the high state tax issue that demands your focused attention: property taxes.

Your Foundation Speaks



by Loyal Park, President
Nebraska Peace Foundation

In recent years there has been an unprecedented growth of conservative think tanks. These are being financed largely through foundations supported by conservative groups and business. The rise of these unelected think tanks is making an impact on the public opinion and probably the reason we have seen a change in the ideological mood in our country.

Nebraska Peace Foundation is here to help restore balance. The Foundation funds a portion of the cost of publishing *The Nebraska Report*. It will be only through peace education that we will have any chance to counter the collusion of these forces. Please do what you can to support the educational work of Nebraskans for Peace with a gift to the Nebraska Peace Foundation.

Immigration, conclusion

eral governments to fight forest fires are immigrants, mostly from Mexico. And an untold number of them are working here illegally.

Nebraska Connection

In Nebraska, the benefits that the immigrants give the state are numerous. Many nearly moribund rural communities have been revitalized by in-migration from south of the border, and it may be that immigration has kept Nebraska from realizing negative population growth and losing a congressional representative.

Nebraska has not always been happy with this help. First, in Nebraska during 2006, there were three notable events. In April, as part of a national mobilization, thousands of immigrants—mostly Latinos—and their supporters took to the streets in Lincoln, Omaha, and Grand Island to demand more just immigration laws and to demonstrate, through their peaceful protests, that “We are not criminals.” (Actually, violation of immigration laws is a civil, and not a criminal, offense.) Secondly, at the same time, the Nebraska Legislature passed an act that grants all undocumented students, graduating from a Nebraska high school, in-state tuition at public universities. Governor Heineman’s veto of this bill was subsequently overridden by the Unicameral.

Third, the Immigration and Naturalization Service raided the Swift & Co. meatpacking plant in Grand Island in December. Over 400 workers were detained and many presumably have either been sent back to their countries or are awaiting deportation. This action split apart many families, leaving children without parents. Many people blame the companies who hire undocumented workers, and believe that the companies should face prosecution; however, the prosecution of companies for hiring illegal immigrants is very uncommon.

The Political Story

The proposed solutions to the issue generally cover two questions: “How are we to enforce current laws and secure the border?” and “What are we to do with the millions of undocumented workers already here?”

With November mid-term elections looming, immigration reform became a key issue in Congress in 2005 and 2006. Believing a ‘tough on immigration’ stance to be a sure-fire path to re-election, the House passed a draconian enforcement bill that called for the construction of a 700-mile fence along the U.S.-Mexican border, and made it criminal to assist illegal immigrants in any way. If persons offered water to an immigrant crossing the desert, they would be ar-

rested. Employers, health workers, and educators would be liable if they provided jobs or services to “illegal aliens.” The Senate bill was quite different, providing for border enforcement but also offering a legal pathway to eventual citizenship for illegal immigrants who met certain criteria, including time spent in the country, the paying of a fine, the learning of English, and various other steps. The Senate bill was not a general amnesty, because it placed much responsibility on the immigrants, and it resembled closely the guest-worker plan favored by President Bush.

Although many congresspersons were clamoring for the passage of immigration reform in 2006, the Senate and the House bills were too far apart for the two houses to achieve a compromise. Later, many of those who advocated for enforcement only, and who wanted to deport all “illegals” were themselves defeated at the polls by voters who apparently didn’t like such mean-spiritedness. Perhaps these restrictionists—most of them Republicans—forgot that Hispanic voters exist in the millions and vote.

The National Guard was called to patrol the border after the self-proclaimed Minutemen militia took up armed positions along the Arizona border. In his 2007 State of the Union address, President Bush promised to double the border patrol. After the joint Senate-House bill to build a 700-mile fence was passed, (price tag: \$2.2 billion), the appropriation for fence construction was not provided.

Now, with a new Democratic Congress, the prospects for the passage of a workable immigration reform bill might be better. By mid-January, new compromise immigration proposals seek temporary legal status for up to 1.5 million illegal agricultural workers. Under the bill, workers who could show they had labored in agriculture for at least 150 work days a year in the past two years would become eligible for a “blue card” giving them temporary legal status. If they had worked an additional three years for 150 days a year, or five years, for at least 100 days a year, they would become eligible for legal residency after paying a \$500 fine, being up-to-date on taxes, having no record of committing bodily injury crimes, or having not caused property damage of more than \$500. This program would last for only five years unless renewed. The wait time for visas for agriculture workers would be reduced.

What Nebraskans for Peace Wants

Nebraskans for Peace does not favor any of the present bills, but it would like to support a policy that affirms human rights, values the contributions of immigrant workers, and reduces the threat of violence along the border. Such a policy would:

- Protect the lives of immigrants by reducing the militarization of the border and halting fence-building. We now have over 400 men, women and children dying per year while crossing the desert;
- Prevent disruption of families by ending the backlog in family reunification that keeps spouses and children separated for years;
- Provide a pathway to legal status for those already established in the U.S.;
- Halt racist workplace raids that target and harass people of Latino descent, be they legal or illegal immigrants;
- Provide for worker safety on the job and protect the right to unionize;
- Grant worker visas that provide strong protection for workers and the right to change jobs;
- Facilitate immigrant integration into the general population through the provision of increased resources for English-as-a-Second-Language classes and naturalization and legal services. It would roll back increases in the fees for naturalization and simplify the application process;
- Ensure civil rights and due process for all immigrants.

We also question the humanity and wisdom of Governor Heineman’s proposal (January 11, 2007) that Nebraska eliminate state food stamp and Medicaid benefits for legal immigrants who have been in the country less than five years. Eliminating these costs is intended to add savings to the state’s budget. After this group lost its federal benefits in 1996, Nebraska agreed to assume these benefits. The bill, LB326, introduced by Sen. Mike Flood at Gov. Heineman’s behest, could actually increase state costs because people who are ill would be forced to go to an emergency room for any medical need. For those who need food stamps, the lack of proper nutrition could only contribute to additional health problems.

In short, Nebraskans for Peace favors a humane route to citizenship for illegal aliens and the provision of the services to them and to their children that citizenship would confer. We favor the development of social protocols within NAFTA so that poverty-stricken people south of the border can survive within their own lands if they wish. Most of all, we wish for justice and peace, not racism and harassment.

For more information, please see: www.immigrantsolidarity.org; www.ne-appleseed.org/immigrants; www.immigrationforum.org; www.irmin.org

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Letters to NFP...

What is the new political development in Iraq that will save the Bush Administration, or at least help it create a more favorable political climate before the presidential election in less than two years from now?

The answer is as simple as it is bloody: sectarian warfare leading to the break-up of Iraq. For the U.S., violence that be blamed on sectarianism has the advantage of being somebody else's fault, while the 'inevitable' break-up of the country and the establishment of pro-American rulers in at least parts of it can be presented as a success of sorts.

Our close ally and friend, the Saudi government, which has placed tight restrictions on donations to Islamic charities and brotherhoods around the world, is now funding Sunni groups in Iraq. For this deadly game to work, the Iranians, for their part, will have to finance and support Shi'i sectarians in Iraq. This, of course, is not something that the U.S. can command. Although the White House can give orders to the Saudi government in Riyadh, the same does not hold true for the regime in Tehran. Nevertheless, the Bush Administration confidently expects—and they are probably not wrong—that the Iranians will play along as a matter of national interest or Shi'i solidarity.

Two recent events are already igniting the sectarian fuel in Iraq: 1) around 40 religious scholars in Saudi Arabia signed an edict that virtually declares open hostilities against Shi'as, and 2) Abdul Rahman Al-Barak, a Saudi religious scholar close to the ruling family, has described the Shi'as, whom he referred to by the derogatory term of "Ar-Rafideen" (the rejectionists), as worse than Jews and Christians.

If the sectarian bomb explodes in Iraq, the fall-out could inflame the 1.3 billion Muslims around the world and the U.S. will find itself in the middle of a massive political and religious jungle, which will ensnare us diplomatically and economically for years to come. For the Bush Administration, however, that's probably politically preferable to the morass they've now got in Iraq.

Mohammed H. Siddiq,
Lincoln, Nebraska

Naturalized U.S. citizen Mohammed Siddiq was born in Medina, Saudi Arabia. A freelance writer and Arabic interpreter by profession, he has lived in Lincoln for over 20 years.

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Amy Goodman, host of Democracy Now addressed a Lincoln audience at the Mary Riepma Ross Media Arts Center in April 2005.



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On Bullying, conclusion

tic violence," and most European countries that I have visited have done something about the issues listed above. But, after a generation of rhetoric about family values, we, ironically or perhaps deliberately, have done almost nothing. UNICEF ranks the U.S. 20th among 21 wealthy nations in the world in its care for child welfare (child welfare aggregates data on bullying, hunger, infant mortality and a number of other subjects), because of the massive child poverty in this country, and because the U.S. does not invest much in day care services, health coverage and preventative care for families and children. We place few protections in place that might make families—gay or straight, single- or double-parented—less abusive and so less likely to create bullies or bullied. Then we blame the families for failing. That indeed is bullying.

The modern family and child exist in a political culture where bullying has become the rule of the day domestically and internationally, where the talk show hosts blabber their bullying political and religious invective, and where popular shows on televi-

sion encourage people to abuse each other verbally. No one cares. For those Christian people who say we are a Christian nation, and yet do not care for the rights of the poor, women, and children: the way of abuse is not the way of First-Century Christianity as I understand it, or of Buddhism, or of the great leaders of the nonviolent movement in the 20th Century.

NFP has to witness in the face of international and national violence. It also has to witness in the face of the cravings in us that create the roots of private violence. Private faith in violence turns into public faith in violence as a policy tool. Those of us who seek a better culture could learn from Robert Epp, NFP State Board member from Henderson. When in the 1980s, Bob was to go out in Nicaragua to speak with the Contras about their attacks on helpless villages, his hosts said that they could provide an armed guard. He refused and went unarmed, letting his conscience and wisdom speak. Would we could educate children to pass such tests.

Cindy Sheehan

will be the keynote speaker at the
Omaha Peace & Justice Expo

Sunday, April 15, 1-5 p.m.

University of Nebraska at Omaha

Milo Bail Student Center; \$5 donation at the door

Cindy Sheehan is the mother of Army Specialist Casey Sheehan, who was killed outside of Baghdad on April 4, 2004, soon after being deployed in Iraq. She first drew international media attention in the summer of 2005, when she camped near the Crawford, Texas home of President George W. Bush in protest against the U.S. occupation of Iraq. The Gold Star Mother has called for the removal of U.S. troops and has criticized the President for misleading Americans into a war. Her first book, *A Mother's Journey through Heartache to Activism*, was published last year.

NFP BULLETIN BOARD

NFP State Office Hours in Lincoln, 941 'O' Street, Ste. 1026, 9:00–2:00 weekdays.

Wednesdays Anti-war vigils, Lincoln Federal Building, 15th & 'O' Streets, 5:00–6:00 p.m.
Call 402-499-6672 for more information.

March 17 National day of protest commemorating Saturday the 4th anniversary of the Iraq invasion.

(See article on page 4 for details about the Lincoln protest planning. Check the NFP website at www.nebraskansforpeace.org for information on the events in Omaha and elsewhere in Nebraska.)

March 27-30 Quaker Lobbyist Joe Volk's visit to Nebraska (See page 2 for details).

To list an event, submit in writing by the tenth of the month preceding the event to:
NFP, 941 'O' Street, #1026, Lincoln, NE 68508, or email: NeReport@neb.rr.com.

Check Out the NFP website: www.nebraskansforpeace.org



Speaking Our Peace

Fun wasn't all we had on the playground in Port Wing, Wisconsin. Bullying was our métier. We were the children of hard-drinking lumberjacks, tough fishermen and hard-working dirt farmers. Much of the time, we had no playground supervision.

So we bullied each other—recess, noon hour, passing each other in the classroom or on the school stairs. We bullied one another for being fat, skinny, dumb, smart; for having parents too pious or too drunk; for poverty or stuck-upedness (meaning wealth), for feed-sack clothes or fancy ones. Bullying meant words, fists, frozen snowballs, sticks and threats: "My dad can whip your dad." My father and mother sent me to first grade, telling me not to fight, but one day dad came by the school in his Model A and found me beaten up near the school curb. He didn't bother to tell school authorities, just picked me up and took me home. For weeks, our evenings after chores were filled with the two of us boxing, dad on his knees to be about my height. Thereafter I fought and bullied, morning, noon and night. It was no way to end the bullying, but it was what dad knew.

One day, Mr. Hogan, our grade school principal hauled me into his eighth grade classroom by the scruff of the neck and told his students: "This is one of the worst boys in the school. I have seen him in eight fights today. What should I do with him?"

The eighth graders gave no answers but peered down at me goggled-eyed. The law of "Bully and be bullied" was the law I knew beyond the doors of my home—a poor law, indeed.

Some people have suggested that the aforementioned type of child and youth culture, experienced by the anti-bullying advocates, is what powers their effort to change things. Of course, pain demands changes. But more is involved. Any decent person has to be appalled by the culture of bullying—its racism, misogyny, homophobia, anti-intellectualism and fear of the different. Bullying's sheer appeal to the hairy ape in us encourages the sense that violence creates truth. Memory returns to me a person of color, fellow teen-aged construction worker, beat up by a group of white teen-aged fellow workers: "Say you're a _____! Say you're a _____! Say you're a _____!" "I'm not! I'm not! I'm not!" When he said what they wanted him to say, they stopped the beating. To stop the bullying, he had to hate himself.

James Joyce's "Stephen" in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* faces a teasing gang: "Stephen kisses his mother good night. Stephen kisses his mother good night!" "No I don't! No, I don't! No, I don't!" And then the gang: "Oh, Stephen *doesn't* kiss his mother good night!" with much laughter and sneering. The bullied

On Bullying

by Paul Olson, UNL Professor Emeritus

cannot win, and the bully assumes that violence creates reality.

Education worthy of the name promotes more than high paper-and-pencil test scores. Its goal is civility, inquiry, the student's pursuit of evidence, logic, negotiation, of resistance to violence as the creator of truth. It seeks little Galileos who can face down their Inquisition. Those who spoke to the Legislature in behalf of LB 205, Senator Howard's anti-bullying bill, sought such an education: NFP, the major education lobbies, the NAACP, the Mexican-American Commission, the Indian Commission, the ACLU, the National Association of Social Workers, various gay and lesbian groups, the Nebraska Department of Education. Parents and children provided the most gripping and disturbing testimony—of teachers, principals and school boards who ignored the abuse of children when it was continuous, verifiable and gratuitous. Women's groups, medical groups, and churches sent letters. With such a coalition in support, it is not surprising that the Education Committee reported out the legislation unanimously. We await the full Legislature's decision.

If we win the bill, we have much to do. Bullying partly comes out of the culture of the school, but the new methods of dealing can change things, e.g. those at Walnut Middle School in Grand Island or those developed in many Nebraska schools by

Jeff Sprague of the University of Oregon. But part of bullying comes from the home and the general culture. A. C. Baldry of the Department of Social Psychology of the University of Rome found, in a study of over a thousand youngsters, that "[e]xposure to interparental violence is associated with bullying and victimization in school, even after controlling for direct child abuse" and that "[v]iolence within the family has detrimental effects on the child's behavior."

What creates domestic violence? Obviously substance abuse and the assumption of male prerogative promoted by our culture. Domestic violence centers and coalitions help.

But the conditions under which the modern working-class family exists are terrible: low pay, no health care for 40 million Americans, often two jobs for one or both parents, no government-licensed universal child care, latch-key after school situations, insufficient Head Start and community learning centers, little guaranteed maternity and paternity leave, full 40-hour or more jobs for both parents of babies and small children, threats of firing or having to move to retain a job. The Women's International Coalition for Economic Justice has called on the world to "[e]nd economic conditions that exacerbate domes-

conclusion on page 11