



The Peace Alliance



STUDENT PEACE ALLIANCE

Department of Peace Campaign Evolution Summary

(A Collaborative Statement Prepared by
the DoP Legislative Action Committee and The Peace Alliance Staff and Board)

The Peace Alliance (TPA) began with and continues to hold the Department of Peace (DoP) legislation as a visionary, broad scope bill advocating for changes at the federal level of our government that will support a culture of peace. A cabinet-level department would elevate peacebuilding to center stage as a national priority. A DoP would create a consistent and ongoing structure to coordinate and support proven violence intervention and prevention programs which already exist, and develop new ones where appropriate. At a national level, it would identify and address the root causes of violence.

In 2009, TPA expanded its legislative advocacy to support the Youth PROMISE (Prison Reduction through Opportunities, Mentoring, Intervention, Support, and Education) Act (YPA), which enables local leaders and community members to develop and oversee programs to address community youth needs and interrupt the cradle to prison pipeline likely for many youth. The Act, when established, will engage communities in violence prevention and peacebuilding much in the way the DoP legislation advocates and models for local programs on a broader scale. In 2011, TPA added the Faces of Peace initiative which identifies and educates us about the current and future evolution of peacebuilding, one face, one program at a time. Additionally, TPA selects issues and advocacy items for domestic and international peacebuilding promotion, allowing for short-term urgent actions, like supporting the United State Institute of Peace when it was in danger of de-authorization in 2011.

TPA and The Peace Alliance Educational Institute continue to grow as significant national and international partners in peacebuilding advocacy and action. Indeed, networking and collaboration with other local and national peacebuilding groups has become an increasing focus for our organization as a means of developing stepping stones toward the infrastructures and policies envisioned in the DoP proposal. Peacebuilding advocates helped create the political space for recent federal reforms, such as the Bureau of Conflict & Stability Operations in the State Department and the Atrocity Prevention Board within the National Security Council. (See more information on this and other peacebuilding infrastructure progress in our “Issues and Advocacy” section of our website under “International Peacebuilding”.)

There has been a continuing dialogue among the staff, board and the grassroots (and now the DOP Legislative Action Committee, formed in March 2011) about how we advocate for the current DoP legislation or the concept of a DoP in light of some of the changes in the federal government over time (such as noted above). As this dialogue continues, the Board holds a DoP/HR 808 as a long term vision which will dance in and out of our immediate focus depending on our strategic needs, staff resources and opportunities that arise which support our larger mission of a culture of peace.

The Peace Alliance encourages grassroots advocates/activists, as it has from the beginning, to:

- go for the connection, not the convincing
- be the change we wish to see in the world as we work to move our culture of peace agenda forward
- understand that the enactment of a DoP (or like-minded federal structure(s)) encourages and educates us on how to hold peace as an underlying principle in everything we do
- work for a paradigm-shift in the meaning/use of power as power with, rather than power over
- dialogue with those who oppose or are on the fence about peacebuilding and/or pending legislation, by asking, if not this, then what?
- reach out to others, individually and as members of other peace and nonviolence groups as well as local law enforcement and governments, in cooperation and/or collaboration toward a culture of peace
- find and share with each other ways to inspire and energize ourselves, our local campaigns, and the national organization for the long haul, for example, by:
 - creating local teams based on congressional district and/or greater regional organizing
 - seeking city council and county supervisor board resolutions supporting the DoP, the YPA and other important legislation and policies
 - participating in our annual local lobbying day, the Friday before Mother’s Day, with our “Peace Wants a Piece of the Pie” action, including Julia Ward Howe’s 1870 declaration that Mother’s Day be a call for international peace
 - continuing to monitor and/or participate in the global movement through The Global Alliance for Ministries and Infrastructures of Peace (formerly The Global Alliance for Ministries and Departments of Peace)
 - gaining media attention, such as writing letters to the editor and issuing press releases for local events.

As one of TPA’s founders, Marianne Williamson, wrote about passage of the DoP legislation during the 111th Congress, “the passage of the bill this session is somewhat unrealistic of course. But that does not matter; no true warrior for peace and justice ever let ‘realism’ stop them. If that were the case, there would have been no abolitionist movement, suffragette movement or civil rights movement. When it comes to doing the right thing, it doesn’t matter whether the status quo is with you yet. You just keep on keepin’ on. We’re building something in the ethers here; when the tipping point will get here, no one knows.” The mission of TPA is to empower civic engagement for a culture of peace; the strategies and visions may vary from year to year or decade to decade as incremental progress is made, yet, we continue to stay the course toward more peace.