



The Peace Alliance



STUDENT PEACE ALLIANCE

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## Department of Peacebuilding Talking Points

- ❑ We need to make reducing and preventing violence a national priority.
- ❑ In these challenging economic times, we must find new and innovative ways to save money and maximize the effectiveness of every dollar spent. Reducing and preventing violence and expanding our capacity for nonviolent conflict resolution has the potential to save the nation hundreds of billions of dollars each year, increase our national security, and build a greater base of responsible citizenship.
- ❑ The legislation holds peace as a strategic policy objective, elevating domestic and international peace policies to the highest levels of the federal government.
- ❑ Current levels of violence in our nation and around the world are fiscally, environmentally and ethically unsustainable.
- ❑ Scientific and medical experts from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have said, “Violence is not an insurmountable problem; it can be prevented through a thoughtful, systematic approach.” A Department of Peacebuilding gives us the platform and resources from which to launch such an approach, thus saving billions of dollars and millions of lives each year.
- ❑ Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has said that the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have taught us that military might is insufficient to win; that we must expand our capacity to build civil society structures (e.g., rule of law, jobs, responsible and accountable government, police and fire, basic services, etc.); and that our government is still mostly structured to deal with a post-Cold War world rather than a post-9/11 world.
- ❑ Domestically, we suffer from a plague of school shootings and bullying, domestic violence, sexual assault, and gang violence. In the U.S., youth homicide rates are more than **10 times** that of other first-world countries, and a World Health Organization report estimates the cost of interpersonal violence in the U.S. is in excess of \$300 billion a year. We must apply new skills and practices to dealing with violence if we are to save money and lives.
- ❑ Internationally, we are experiencing terrorist attacks, along with more than 20 major armed conflicts around the globe. The threat of nuclear war looms over the planet and grows with each passing year.
- ❑ According to U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), an average of 16 young people are murdered every day in America—they didn’t die in a car crash, they didn’t die of a drug overdose, they were murdered. That’s more American young-people dying every day due to violence in the so-called safety of their own neighborhoods than we have service men and women dying in Iraq due to a war.

- ❑ Although there is a wealth of genius in our nation to deal with these crucial issues, the best thinking of the American People concerning violence prevention is not reflected in our national and local policies.
- ❑ The Department of Peacebuilding will offer proven methods for reducing and preventing all forms of violence which will result in prudent and conservative fiscal policy.
- ❑ The Department of Peacebuilding will give those with peacebuilding expertise an institutional platform from which to support the nation by providing them the necessary organization and resources to maximize their effectiveness, which ultimately benefits the American people and the world.
- ❑ The Department of Peacebuilding legislation has been consistently mis-represented as attempting to replace the Department of Defense. This has never been the case, and in fact, 85 percent of the requested funding is restricted for violence reduction and prevention in the United States
- ❑ In the past, being “healthy” was believed to “just happen” because of good genes or being lucky enough to avoid disease. We now know that health must be cultivated. The same is true for peace. Peace doesn’t just happen. It must be cultivated through active practice, education, and investment. This is what a Department of Peacebuilding will help us do.
- ❑ It has been asked, why is it that so many people are violent, but not illiterate? And the answer given is because we teach our children to read. Violent behavior is learned; nonviolent conflict resolution can also be taught and learned. Having a Department of Peacebuilding will provide us with the resources and focus needed to do that.
- ❑ Hitler can be compared to a cancerous tumor that could be surgically removed, and the world’s military effort succeeded in doing that. Terrorism is more like a virus that grows in sick cells and then spreads to healthy cells, creating great devastation and weakening the entire body. We have learned that we cannot bomb or kill this virus into submission. We must be developing a healthy body that can withstand the threat of terrorism by addressing its root causes, expanding our capacity for nonviolent conflict resolution, and building the civil society infrastructures needed to make terrorism unwanted, unnecessary and unsupportable.
- ❑ We must expand our capacity to resolve conflict before it erupts into violence
- ❑ Policy-making today tends to reactive rather than proactive. We wait for violence to occur, and then turn to our already over-taxed military and police and ask them to fix it. We must shift the focus from reaction to prevention, allowing us to save billions of dollars and countless lives each year.
- ❑ Conflict is inevitable; violence is not.