

## September 2015 Action:

Letters to the Editor Honoring the UN-recognized International Day of Peace (September 21<sup>st</sup>), Focusing on One of Two Topics:

- The global importance of the Iran Nuclear Agreement, which Congress votes on this month, or
- The local importance of passing the Youth PROMISE Act, bringing more peace to our communities

**You will certainly be able to find an article you can respond to, regarding either the Iran Deal, or local violence/incarceration/community. Through highlighting solutions, and concrete policy goals, we can offer practical hope, solidarity, and empowering information to thousands of readers.**

### **Basic Steps**

1. Decide which topic you prefer to address – page 2 and page 3 of this Action Sheet may help you become more familiar with both topics.
2. Identify local daily newspapers. If you want guidance, see list here: [http://bit.ly/find\\_newspapers](http://bit.ly/find_newspapers)
3. See the paper (online?) “letters,” “opinion,” or editorial section to find letter criteria.
4. Read a few LTEs they have published to get an idea of how writers begin them.
5. Feel free to do further research, beyond the info on the back of this sheet.
6. Write and submit your letter, using their criteria and the E.P.I.C. format below.
7. The more letters sent in by your team, the more likely at least one will be published.

**Please be sure to write unique letters. Read aloud to each other for inspiration!!**

### **The “E.P.I.C.” Format**

#### **Engage:**

*To the Editors:*

**Reference an article** you saw, about either the Iran Nuclear Agreement, or something that connects with YPA such as: youth violence, incarceration, community health and safety, or budget concerns; **and also share your emotional reaction to it.** **Your feelings** make this personal and connecting.

#### **Problem:**

What are the thoughts you have connected with those feelings – especially as the International Day of Peace approaches? What is “missing”? What is “needed”?

#### **Inform About Solution(s):**

The value of effective international diplomacy, or of proven local solutions - state in your own words, from your heart, why such things are important to recognize.

#### **Call to Action:**

Call for Congress (mention your Members by name) – to either 1) Support the Iran Nuclear Agreement, as a sensible and powerful diplomatic step toward lasting peace; or 2) Champion the Youth PROMISE Act, as a proven and practical approach to making our towns safer and ending the schools-to-prisons pipeline. You might also urge all readers to contact their MOCs too, raising their voices for continuing these effective steps.

#### **Signing Off**

Under your signature mention that you are a volunteer with The Peace Alliance locally.

## Talking Points

### **For the Iran Deal:**

The current six-party agreement over nuclear energy and weapons regulation is perhaps the most important peace agreement in this decade. Congress has the power to reject that agreement with a vote in September. You can add a positive, thoughtful voice to this issue!

### **Basic Information:**

- After years of fretful and often hostile negotiations, and sanctions, President Obama reached an accord with Iran in July - along with five other nations - to limit and monitor Iran's nuclear power programs (with inspections to make sure they don't seek to create weapons), in exchange for a gradual lifting of some sanctions.
- Congress passed a law in May (and the President signed it) giving them 60 days from the conclusion of negotiations to either approve, disapprove, or do nothing regarding the deal. A rejection of the deal would maintain US sanctions.
- This vote is expected on September 17th.

### **Well-Founded Opinions in Support of this Agreement:**

- *"The agreement will strengthen U.S. security and that of our partners. Rigorous monitoring measures will remain in place not just throughout the long duration of the agreement but even after the core limits of the agreement expire."* [4/6/15]  
Ambassador Brooke Anderson; Prof. Matthew Bunn, Harvard University; Ambassador Robert Gallucci; and 27 other nuclear security experts<sup>1</sup>
- *"This is an historic agreement which stops Iran's nuclear program in its tracks for at least ten years, and probably for many more. It includes all necessary technical measures to ensure that Iran is complying with its commitments, provides sanctions relief only as those commitments are demonstrated, and will make the U.S. and its friends in the region far more secure than they would be in any other scenario."*  
Barry Blechman, Co-Founder/Emeritus, Stimson<sup>2</sup>
- *"What would be the consequences of disapproving the agreement? Iran will have a strong incentive to accelerate its nuclear program, in the belief that the United States is more likely to attack than ever before. No centrifuges would be removed, no uranium stockpiles reduced, no enrichment facilities converted, no nuclear sites monitored by outside inspectors. At the same time, multilateral sanctions would likely collapse. The United States would keep its own comprehensive sanctions, but they would be much less effective than before. ... Iran would reap not only the economic benefits of resuming trade, but also the political benefits of being seen as "the reasonable party." Iran's reputation and regional clout may be enhanced by the deal, but they are likely to grow even further if the United States is the one to reject it."* Diana Ohlbaum, Senior Associate at the Center for Strategic and International Studies

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<sup>1</sup> (from article: "Experts Support the Emerging Nuclear Deal with Iran," Win Without War, June, 2015)

<sup>2</sup> Founded in 1989, the Stimson Center is a nonprofit, nonpartisan institution devoted to enhancing international peace and security through a unique combination of rigorous analysis and outreach. The Center's approach is pragmatic — geared toward providing policy alternatives, solving problems, and overcoming obstacles to a more peaceful and secure world.

**For the YPA:**

**(Remember – your letter is your own – it can be as basic or as detailed as you wish)**

**The Problems:**

The US is home to less than 5% of the world's population, but incarcerates more than 25% of the world's prisoners. We incarcerate more juveniles per capita than the next twelve leading industrialized countries combined – and we are the only nation incarcerating youth for life without the possibility of parole.<sup>1</sup>

Most states spend over \$100,000 per incarcerated youth per year<sup>2</sup>, and with recidivism rates as high as 80%,<sup>3</sup> our current juvenile corrections practices are in urgent need of improvement.

**Example Solutions YPA might amplify:**

Pennsylvania adopted a similar approach to the Youth PROMISE Act, and over a ten year period they saved \$5 for every \$1 invested.<sup>4</sup> Due to the shrinking number of juvenile detainees, they were able to close a 100-bed juvenile detention facility.

Within two years of implementing a Restorative Discipline program in West Philadelphia High School, incidents of assault and disorderly conduct dropped more than 65%<sup>5</sup>.

**Youth PROMISE Act:**

The Youth PROMISE Act (Prison Reduction through Opportunities, Mentoring, Intervention, Support, and Education) will fund, implement, and evaluate an array of evidence-based, locally controlled violence prevention and intervention practices.

Examples might include mentoring, after school programs, conflict resolution and bullying cessation education in schools, restorative justice practices and many others. (If you know of any good state or local programs, mention them by name.)

The bill 1) funds evidence-based violence prevention & intervention practices, 2) empowers local control and community oversight, 3) reduces crime and saves taxpayer money, and 4) creates accountability by linking funding to measurable success.

*Your letters can inspire thousands with tangible hope, and nourishing solidarity.*

*Have Fun, Write Well, and Build Peace!*

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/09/20/juvenile-life-without-parole\\_n\\_3962983.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/09/20/juvenile-life-without-parole_n_3962983.html)

<sup>2</sup> Sticker Shock: Calculating the Full Price Tag for Youth Incarceration <http://www.justicepolicy.org/research/8477>

<sup>3</sup> Study: Long-term Juvenile Incarceration Fails to Decrease Re-offending Rates <http://www.cjci.org/news/5476>

<sup>4</sup> Bumbarger, Jones, et al., "The Economic return on PCCD's Investment in Research-based Programs: A Cost-Benefit Assessment of Delinquency and Prevention in Pennsylvania", The Prevention Research Center for the Promotion of Human Development, Penn State, March 2008, p. 3

[http://www.prevention.psu.edu/pubs/docs/PCCD\\_Report2.pdf](http://www.prevention.psu.edu/pubs/docs/PCCD_Report2.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> [fixschooldiscipline.org/toolkit/educators/goodnews/](http://fixschooldiscipline.org/toolkit/educators/goodnews/)