

## **April Action: Letters to Editors on U.S. Department of Peacebuilding**

This month we will write to our newspapers about the U.S. Department of Peacebuilding legislation (HR 808) as well as organizing our nation more effectively around the work and practices of peacebuilding.

Every paper has its own criteria regarding letter length and other considerations. Please use the “E.P.I.C.” structure – illustrated below with some suggested content for each section.

### **Basic Steps**

1. Identify local daily newspapers. Find list here: [http://bit.ly/find\\_newspapers](http://bit.ly/find_newspapers)
2. Identify articles from the paper that address some issue(s) a Dept. of Peacebuilding would address. There shouldn't be too much of a problem, from local violence to international conflict, or maybe noteworthy solutions, a plethora of issues should be available.
3. Look in the paper's (print or online) editorial section - find criteria for submitting a letter.
4. Read a few LTEs they have published to get an idea of how writers begin them.
5. Ascertain whether your US House Members are already co-sponsoring H.R. 808, so you can thank them or urge them to co-sponsor – see the list of co-sponsors at <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/thomas.php> enter “HR 808” in the bill number field.
6. Draft 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 of them will be published. Please be sure to write unique letters!

***Note: for the “hook” to be relevant, your letter should be submitted as soon as possible after their article is published! We suggest you find an article in today's paper and complete and submit your letters TODAY together at your meeting!  
Have Fun, Write Well, and Build Peace!***

### **The “E.P.I.C.” Format**

Please frame everything in your own words.

#### **Engage:**

Reference an article about violence or the cessation of violence in your paper. It might be something on conflict in international hot spots, or an issue of gang or youth violence, domestic violence, or any other relevant issue in your community. In about one sentence state your reaction to the article, perhaps a positive reaction to the celebration of some work or with some concern about an issue they have written about.

#### **Problem:**

Mention (in your own words, but perhaps using stats provided below) the national tragedy of rampant violence, crime, war and incarceration.

#### ***Examples:***

In the U.S., youth homicide rates are more than 10 times that of other leading industrialized nations, on par with the rates in developing countries and those experiencing rapid social and economic changes.

There is growing evidence of higher rates of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in some urban populations, such as Atlanta, D.C., Chicago and L.A., than in war veterans. Because the violence is widespread, many refer to it as a pandemic and noted that multiple generations are

affected and have a harder time in school, relationships, getting jobs, and avoiding crime and addiction.

According to the CDC, violence is a serious public health problem in the United States that erodes communities by reducing productivity, decreasing property values, and disrupting social services.

With less than 5 percent of the world's population, the United States has nearly 25 percent – 2.3 million – of its prisoners.

The economic costs of violence are staggering. The economic impact of containing violence was estimated at \$9.46 trillion in 2012 or 11% of Gross World Product. (Global Peace Index 2013, Institute for Economics & Peace).

### **Inform About the Solution:**

The 2009 World Health Organization showed that programs which address underlying causes and risk factors can reduce the frequency of violence-related outcomes by up to 50%. Violence prevention saves many times more dollars than the cost of dealing with conflict after it erupts into violence. Not only does violence prevention save money, it saves lives, improves quality of life and productivity, and is the right thing to do.

Domestically, the Department of Peacebuilding will develop policies and allocate resources to effectively reduce the levels of domestic and gang violence, child abuse, bullying and various other forms of societal discord.

Internationally, the Department will advise the President and Congress on the most sophisticated ideas and techniques regarding peace-creation among nations.

Many government agencies and nonprofits are doing important research and creating effective economical and life-saving programs, but there is no unifying, coordinating governmental entity to collaborate and promote these resources across all levels and departments of government as well as across all levels of society. We must sustain and promulgate violence prevention programs that work and are cost effective.

We are in the midst of a pandemic of national and international violence. It is time to make violence prevention a national priority. We need a United States Department of Peacebuilding.

### **Call to Action:**

Thank your Members of the House of Representatives (by name) for co-sponsoring the bill or ask them to do so if they are not co-sponsors.

(Some papers may limit letters to 150 or 200 words, so each of these sections may be very concise. They usually ask you to include address and daytime and nighttime phone number.)

### **Signing Off**

Under your signature, you might mention that you are a volunteer of The Peace Alliance locally.