

PEACE IS EVERY STEP

Department of Peacebuilding 2015 Report

By Nancy Merritt on Behalf of the National DoP Committee

In 2015, Department of Peacebuilding (DoP) supporters – including the Peace Alliance National DoP Committee, state and regional campaigns, DoP partners, and individual supporters – worked to “Make Peace A Priority – Establish a U.S. Department of Peacebuilding.”

In 2001, Congressman Dennis Kucinich (OH) introduced ‘modern’ legislation calling for a cabinet-level Department of Peace(bilding) which, for the first time looked at peacebuilding through a wholeistic lens and included both domestic and international peacebuilding. With each new session of Congress legislation has to be introduced anew. For the 2015 session, as for the 2013 session, the DoP group **worked to ensure DoP legislation was introduced**. Leading up to the 2015 sessions, we worked with DoP legislation sponsor, Congresswoman Barbara Lee on **incorporating evolving peacebuilding practices into the Department of Peacebuilding Act** of 2015, which was introduced on 2/26/15.

Throughout the year, we made **hundreds of contacts with members of Congress urging them to cosponsor DoP legislation and to support other peacebuilding initiatives**. This included contacting legislators during the Season for Nonviolence (January 30 – April 4), as part of the Mother’s Day Peace-Wants-A-Piece-of-the-Federal-Budget-Pie campaign, and during local and DC lobbying days. **By the end of 2015, 28 members of Congress cosponsored DoP legislation.**

In September and October, we visited more than **150 Washington, DC offices of members of Congress and the Senate, including visits to all 53 CA members of Congress (39 Democrats, 14 Republicans)**. We also delivered to Congress **3,500 letters** urging support of a DoP and the Youth PROMISE Act (Youth Prison Reduction through Oppportunity Mentoring Intervention Support and Education ACT -- YPA/ S.1770/ HR 2197). During this same period, other DoP supporters **AMPLIFIED our visits by calling DC from their home states.**

We held a **break-out session at the October Peace Alliance national conference in Washington, DC**, featuring former Peace Alliance Executive Director Dot Maver.

To **spread the word about peacebuilding**, we attended marches; tabled and spoke at many events; organized workshops; wrote articles, literature and letters about peacebuilding; and attended town halls and other Congressional meetings,

events and telephone conferences. One Northern California DoP advocate wrote **weekly letters to President Barack Obama**. San Diego (CA) DoP supporters held monthly peace-promoting events with local students and community leaders. The **New Mexico Department of Peacebuilding Initiative worked for passage of a bill to create a state Department of Peace**. The CA TPA/ DoP group held monthly phone conferences with guest speakers who discussed topics relating to peacebuilding. We connected with former DoP sponsor, Dennis Kucinich, and expanded our organizational endorser list, including gaining the endorsement of actor Sharon Stone. We took the DoP campaign to Congress, to the Pope, to Steven Colbert, to the CA Democratic Party, to the National Association of Community and Restorative Justice (NACRJ) conference in Fort Lauderdale, FL, to a county fair, to community groups, to students, and to others.

During 2015, we succeeded in gaining **endorsement of the CA Democratic Party (CDP) of 1) DoP legislation and 2) a related UN resolution** urging that body and all member nations to support infrastructures of peace within and among nations. We began working to further incorporate peacebuilding in the CDP 2016 Platform. We supported at every step **successful CA legislation to expand educational opportunities to include all CA foster youth in state-funded educational services such as tutoring and mentoring**. We supported the National Peace Academy in its collaboration with George Mason University to create a 'civilian Camp David' to research, focus, and train in violence prevention.

We expanded the work of the National DoP Committee to include other dedicated advocates and look forward to our 2016 peacebuilding collaborations.

Peacebuilding is many steps and peace is every step. ***For more detail on the DoP campaign 2015 steps for peace – including lobbying, networking, speaking and writing our peace, see below.***

The following is a sample of 2015 outreach by the Department of Peacebuilding campaign to “Make Peace A Priority – Establish a U.S. Department of Peacebuilding” through lobbying, networking, speaking and writing our peace:

Lobbying

- Organized/ participated in **2015 Season for Nonviolence** recruitment of DoP cosponsors through hundreds of contacts with members of Congress and their staffs. Our 13-member task force contacted approximately 70 members of Congress throughout the Season for Nonviolence, including approximately 700 contacts. During this period of January – April, 24 MOCs signed on as cosponsors. The SNV Task Force included: (1) Betty Cooper (MO), (2) Anne Creter (NJ), (3) Jo Ann Gaines (CA), 4) Karen Johnson (IL), 5) Maggi Koren (CA), (6) Lily Marie (CA), (7) Nancy Merritt

(CA), (8) Kendra Mon (CA), (9) Lorrie Norby (CA), (10) Debra Poss (GA), (11) Elisabeth Scharbaum (CA), (12) Pat Simon (CA), (13) Jerilyn Stapleton (CA). The 13-member task force included 8 from CA, 1 from GA, 1 from IL, 1 from MA, 1 from MO, and 1 from NJ.

- **Wrote weekly letters to President Barack Obama** urging him to support a U.S. DoP and other peacebuilding measures
- **New Mexico DoP Campaign lobbied for passage of 2015 legislation to create a New Mexico DoP**
- Organized/ participated in **Mother's Day (Peace-Wants-a-Piece-of-the Pie) and other in-District meetings and events** with members of Congress to lobby for DoP and other peacebuilding initiatives – including meetings and/or pie drop-offs to Katherine Clark (MA), Rep. John Garamendi (CA), Rep. Jared Huffman (CA), Rep. Barbara Lee (CA), Rep. John Lewis (GA), Rep. Scot Peters (CA), and Rep. Adam Schiff (CA).
- In September 2015, Nancy Merritt **visited the offices of 37 members of Congress in DC**, and delivered DoP committee letters to 28 former DoP cosponsors.
- In 10/15 National and CA Department of Peacebuilding (DoP) committees, and other DoP partners lobbied the DC offices of **125+ members of Congress and U.S. Senators** and “AMPLIFYED” those visits with calls from the field and visits to the state office of some members of Congress. The National DoP committee delivered **134 personalized letters** to members of Congress. The CA DoP group delivered almost **3,500 letters** from Californians, including 3,400 urging various members of Congress to cosponsor the Department of Peacebuilding Act of 2015 (DoP/ HR 1111) and another 100 letters asking **CA Senator Barbara Boxer** to cosponsor the Youth PROMISE ACT (YPA/ S.1770/ HR 2197).
- In 10/15, we also “**AMPLIFIED Our Voices**” in support of **10/15 DoP lobbying**, through an e-blast to CA database and e-mails to CA Democratic Party Central Committees, Democratic Party Clubs, and friends.
- In 2015, the **New Mexico Department of Peacebuilding Initiative began its work to pass 2016 legislation to create a New Mexico DoP.**

DoP & UN Resolutions & Endorsements, PoV Collaboration

- **The CA Democratic Party endorsed DoP legislation and adopted UN Peacebuilding Resolution** calling upon United Nations and all member

nations to support departments and infrastructures of peace within member nations and among nations

- **9/10/15** – Dot Maver and Nancy Merritt met with Rep. Barbara Lee's office (Legislative Director Diala Jadallah, regarding '**Civilian Camp David**' at **George Mason University/ Point of View in Collaboration with National Peace Academy**)

Promoting/ Educating/ Networking (Tabling, Marches, Workshops)

- Coordinated monthly peace marches and events with elementary, middle and high school students in San Diego (CA), organized by San Diego DoP group (AFDOP), including an event at which TPA President Bob Baskin spoke.
- Coordinated **weekly Sunday tabling** with DoP display and outreach during Season for Nonviolence at the Moorestown, NJ Chapter of an Association of Global New Thought affiliated spiritual center (Center for Conscious Living).
- Displayed DoP Gandhi/King poster and materials at Sacred Heart Church's annual February Peace Fair in Camden, NJ
- Participated in **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day events** including Atlanta, GA march (Black Lives Matter theme) to burial sites of Martin Luther King and Coretta Scott King, displaying DoP banner
- **Tabled during Valentine's Day** One Billion Rising Atlanta event at Atlanta City Hall with postcards asking Rep. Hank Johnson and Rep. John Lewis to cosponsor DoP 2015
- Organized **DoP workshop at Sonoma State University** (CA)
- Participated in city/ county government meetings and task forces, including in Santa Rosa (CA)
- Marched in New York City carrying DoP banner at the April 26 global "*Peace and Planet International Mobilization for a Nuclear Free, Peaceful, Just and Sustainable World*" rally in conjunction with the historic UN nuclear talks
- Arranged a DoP display and outreach at *New Jersey State Democratic Party* annual May Conference "Progressive Caucus"
-
- Co-coordinated/ sponsored **Japanese Peace Lantern Ceremony** in Berkeley (CA) in remembrance of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945

- Held DoP banner at local September 10th *MoveOn Candlelight Vigil for Peace and Diplomacy* happening all over the country, emphasizing the consequential vote that members of Congress would soon be taking regarding the Iran Nuclear Deal
- Arranged a DoP display and outreach at the *Khalsa Healing Arts Yardley (PA) Peace Festival* on Sept 21 Peace Day as part of Peace Day Philly celebration
- Coordinated week-long Nevada County (CA) Peace Fair Booth featuring CA TPA/ DoP and many other peace groups
- **Tabled at International Day of Peace events, including** Peace Sunday at Agape International Spiritual Center in Los Angeles (CA) and celebration near Sacramento (CA)
- **Tabled at** Petaluma Progressive Festival (CA)
- **Took Peace to the Pope** when Anne Creter, with her DoP sandwich board, attended 3 events featuring Pope Francis events (DC, 2 in Philadelphia, PA), garnered news coverage about these events and photo of Anne Creter appeared in the newsletter of her Republican Congressman
- Supported other peacebuilding organizations by attending/ promoting their events, including Attitudinal Healing Center (Oakland, CA), Oakland (CA) Peace Center, Nevada County Peace Center (CA), UN Association events, Creating Peaceful Schools Conference (Walnut Creek, CA), Tibetan Uprising Day events (Berkeley & San Francisco, CA), supporting the Sudanese community in Monterey (CA).

Speaking DoP

- Jerilyn Stapleton spoke about the Peace Alliance, DoP & YPA on a panel at the National Association of Community and Restorative Justice (NACRJ) in Fort Lauderdale, FL
- Many CA DoP members and supporters spoke to dozens of CA Democratic Party (CDP) groups throughout the State of CA to generate support for CDP endorsement of DoP legislation.
- Anne Creter (NJ) conducted DoP presentations at two *Delaware River Valley Pachamama Community* monthly gathering events (May and June)
- Organized DoP breakout session at 10/15 TPA DC Conference. Session featured former TPA Executive Director Dot Maver. Also created/

distributed **flyer** on “Working together for a U.S. Department of Peacebuilding,” and posted **YouTube videos** about the DoP breakout session. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E6ebD-Yaw5s> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ooUE7ow3y7s>

- Spoke our peace through **monthly CA TPA/ DoP phone conferences** including on “Unraveling Violence” with Allan Johnson, “World Beyond Violence & a Peacebuilding Department” with David Swanson, “Peace on the Inside: Kingian Nonviolence & the Incarcerated Community” with Theresa Guy Moran, “Point of View & Peacebuilding Going Forward” with Dot Maver, and “The UN: New Paths and Causal Linkages to Attaining Peace & Security” with Herb Behrstock

Writing DoP / Publicizing (literature, articles, postcards)

- Drafted 03/01/15 TPA **e-blast regarding “U.S. Dept. of Peacebuilding Legislation Re-Introduced”** and TPA posting **“Season for Nonviolence Action: February 2015 Congressional DoP Calls”**
- Provided **DoP updates** to the *Philadelphia Yearly (Quaker) Meeting Society of Friends Peace Standing Committee* and the *Global Movement for the Culture of Peace* committee at the UN
- **Updated Peace Alliance website and literature regarding DoP**, including DoP Key Highlights, DoP Governmental Endorsers, DoP Organization & Prominent Individual Endorsers
- Drafted 07/09/15 **14th Anniversary of DoP Legislation national e-blast entitled “Paving the way for peace ...”**
- **Drafted DoP Mid-Year Report and Addendum to TPA Mid-Year Report**
- Drafted & published article on DoP accomplishments within the CA Democratic Party in Nevada County CA Democratic Party Newsletter (Lily Marie and Nancy Merritt)
- **Created DoP postcard** (“Make Peace a Priority: U.S. Department of Peacebuilding – More Important Than Ever” for distribution at TPA DC Conference in 10/15 & elsewhere
- Drafted TPA website **article “Mainstreaming Peacebuilding at the 2015 CA Democratic party Convention”** (May 2015).
- Drafted TPA website **article, “CA Democratic Party Endorses 2015 DoP Act & Adopts United Nations Peacebuilding Resolution”** (9/2/15)

- **Took DoP to Steven Colbert** with DoP Committee letters to Steven Colbert re difference between the Department of State and a Department of Peacebuilding
- Drafted TPA website article, **“Walking the Halls of Congress: DoP Fall 2015 Lobbying Report”** (12/15)
- **E-blast by www.peacenow.com** relating to DoP lobbying in DC
- **E-blast by Oakland Peace Center (CA)** relating to No. CA TPA events
- TPA sent 12/15 – **DoP nationwide e-blast sent, “Visionary Solutions to Move Humanity Forward.”** E-blast asked members of Congress, senators, and President Obama to support creation of a U.S. Department of Peacebuilding.

Other Highlights

- Held **phone conference with former Congressman Dennis Kucinich** (3/15)
- Recruited **organizational DoP cosponsors**, including peacenow.org and actress Sharon Stone
- **Formed 15th Anniversary DoP Partners Team** & calls w/ DoP Partners to plan future actions.

MAKE PEACE A PRIORITY – Establish a U.S. Department of Peacebuilding
