

**LEGISLATION REQUEST FOR THE CDP TO SUPPORT
THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF PEACEBUILDING ACT OF 2015 (DoP/HR 1111)
Introduced by CA Congresswoman Barbara Lee on 02/26/15**

“It is past time to establish a Department of Peacebuilding to reduce suffering on a national and global scale while saving billions of dollars through violence reduction and increased economic productivity.” - Barbara Lee, Letter to Members of Congress, 2/21/13

I. WHY A DEPARTMENT OF PEACEBUILDING? WHY NOW?

Violence cuts across all sectors and populations of our nation and our world. We have to look no further than the recent shootings in Ferguson, Mo and elsewhere that have brought about the “Black Lives Matter” movement and the Sandy Hook school massacre of 5 and 6-year-old children and their teachers. The cost of violence containment to our nation – excluding the cost of war – is around \$2.16 trillion annually and **1.6 million people die each year due to violence.**

Violence and its economic repercussions reach into our families, our schools, our work places, our streets. Many young people who drop out of school do so for violence-related reasons. Violence feeds the prison system and the war machine. Excessive funds spent on the prison/ war machine deplete spending on addressing the root causes of violence and violence prevention – **monies which should be directed to education, jobs, healthcare, hunger eradication, rebuilding our infrastructure and the environment.**

We don't have to accept violence. Violence is learned behavior. Violence prevention and peacebuilding are also learned behaviors. It's time to put our money and resources into peacebuilding. It is time to take seriously that violence is tearing apart our culture and to put peacebuilding at the forefront of our national policy by creating a cabinet-level U.S. Department of Peacebuilding.

The problem of violence is not new. What is new is that we don't have to accept violence as our way of life. The challenges of violence demand our full resources and attention. The disparity of focus and funding for war in contrast to peacebuilding is profound and disturbing. What is new is that as the science of peacebuilding grows, we know there are policies and practices that reduce and prevent violence. It is time to take the bold step of saying enough to violence as a way of life. We can no longer afford the money squandered and lives lost on violence. **PEACEBUILDING IS THE ONLY VIABLE CHOICE.** We cannot afford to wait on breaking the cycle of violence.

II. OFFICIAL LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY – 2015 (Congressional Research Services)

Department of Peacebuilding Act of 2015 (DoP 2015) - Establishes a Department of Peacebuilding in the executive branch, to be headed by a Secretary of Peacebuilding, dedicated to peacebuilding, peacemaking, and the study and promotion of conditions conducive to both domestic and international peace and a culture of peace. Sets forth the mission of the Department, which includes the: (1) cultivation of peace and peacebuilding as a strategic national policy objective; and (2) development of policies that promote national and international conflict prevention, nonviolent intervention, mediation, peaceful conflict resolution, and structured conflict mediation.

Establishes in the Department: (1) the Office of Peace Education and Training, (2) the Office of Domestic Peacebuilding Activities, (3) the Office of International Peacebuilding Activities, (4) the Office of Technology for Peace, (5) the Office of Arms Control and Disarmament, (6) the Office of Peacebuilding Information and Research, (7) the Office of Human Rights and Economic Rights, and (8) the Intergovernmental Advisory Council on Peace.

Establishes a Federal Interagency Committee on Peace to coordinate the actions of the Department with other federal agencies. Directs the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State to consult with the Secretary [of Peacebuilding] concerning nonviolent means of conflict resolution when a conflict between the United States and any other government or entity is imminent or occurring. **(See reverse side.)**

III. PEACEBUILDING IS A CDP VALUE

DoP 2015 addresses the need for creating a culture of peace in this country and internationally, with 85% of the bill's funding going toward domestic peacebuilding. **Peacebuilding is a CDP value.** The CDP 2012 Party Platform provides that the Party will "promote peace, rule of law and human rights by instituting and funding time-tested and cost effective tools and strategies for peace which address the hate, vitriol and violent conflicts that are rampant in today's society, which interfere with our security and prosperity, both at home and abroad."

Both the California Democratic Party Platforms of 2012 and 2014 and DoP 2015 call for:

- public education programs that promote tolerance and respect for diversity
- school and community cultures where students and staff are free from bullying and harassment by implementing curricula in nonviolent conflict resolution education for teachers, students, parents, school community and community at large
- strong & healthy families, including supporting mental health service, domestic violence prevention, gang prevention, anti-bullying programs, substance abuse prevention, and parenting skills
- restorative justice programs in the criminal justice system to bring together offenders, victims, and community members to repair harm through accountability and rehabilitation
- assistance in re-entry by incarcerated individuals by including training in anger management and peacebuilding skills, life skills, education and job skills

IV. DEPARTMENT OF PEACEBUILDING SUPPORTERS

The **CDP as a whole and the Legislation committee unanimously endorsed DoP 2013 legislation.** Hundreds of **CDP delegates,** including **State Senator Mark Leno and labor leader Delores Huerta,** have signed petitions in support this. Many **CDP groups** have supported, and continue to support, this effort. **DoP 2013 endorsers** included: **Regions** (3, 5, 6, 8, 18); **DCCs** (Calaveras, Contra Costa, El Dorado, Lake, Madera, Marin, Nevada, Plumas, Sacramento, Solano, Sonoma); **clubs** (Lake County Stonewall Democratic Club, Nevada County Democratic Women's Club, Turlock Democratic Club); and **caucuses** (Veterans). African American Caucus Chair **Darren Parker** testified for this legislation when the CDP endorsed DoP 2013.

To date 43 (and counting) **cities/ counties** in this country have endorsed DoP legislation, including 13 in California (Albany, Arcata, Berkeley, Los Angeles, Marin County, Oakland, Palo Alto, San Jose, Santa Cruz, Sebastopol, West Hollywood, San Francisco County, San Jose). Many organizations endorse DoP legislation.

V. VIOLENCE IS COSTLY, PEACE IS PRICELESS

How we spend our money and our energy is a choice. Reducing the cost of violence within the U.S. (excluding the costs of war) by 3% would pay for a U.S. Department of Peacebuilding. Studies show **violence prevention is up to 60 times more cost effective than trying to repair the damage after conflict has erupted into violence.**

- During the past century, our nation fielded soldiers in battle during 64 of those years, and 231 million people died in wars and conflict – most of them civilians (Milton Leitenberg in Deaths in Wars and Conflicts in the 20th Century)
- The U.S. has the highest incarceration rate in the world – higher than Iran, Iraq and China combined. (International Centre for Prison Studies.)
- More than 1 in 28 children have a parent locked up behind bars – that's 2.7 million children in the U.S. (Pew Charitable Trusts)

SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO CREATE A U.S. DEPARTMENT OF PEACEBUILDING

"Let us declare our intent for peace. Let us work to make nonviolence an organizing principle in our society. Let us recommit ourselves to statecraft, which sees peace, not war as being inevitable. Let us work for a world where someday war becomes archaic." - Dennis Kucinich