

Rebuild America, or Bomb Afghanistan? Bring our War Dollars Home!

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Meanwhile, a National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform is talking about cuts to Social Security, Medicare and the home mortgage deduction to address the nation's growing budget deficit.

An educational technician I worked with told me that after her father died, her mother depended on SS to raise her and her siblings. "We would never have made it without that monthly check," she told me, but was too scared to write a letter to the editor about it for fear of repercussions from her employer.

The average cost to deploy a soldier to Afghanistan for a year is \$1,000,000. It has more than tripled since '01, mostly because of for-profit contractors. Current data indicate there are more contractors in Afghanistan than troops (and their deaths go largely unreported).

Meanwhile, my local school budget came up about \$1,000,000 short this year, because sharply reduced federal subsidies to my state resulted in sharply reduced contributions to schools. Will local taxpayers be willing to make up the difference? Would they even be able to make up the difference, what with unemployment running to double digits?

Senator Olympia Snowe told me last Saturday that she would vote "yes" on the war supplemental bill because she could not refuse while we have "troops in the field." I told her about budget cuts for the mentally retarded elderly in Maine, and that ten years of funding for war in Afghanistan was not an emergency but a policy.

Meanwhile, two elementary schools near me closed in June for lack of funding. Parents cried openly at school board meetings, and pointed out that reading achievement for students at the schools was much higher than average. Not deploying one soldier to Afghanistan would have kept both schools open, with money to spare.

My senator was looking at a large banner that said Bring Our War \$\$ Home as we had our conversation. CODEPINK Maine has waged a vigorous campaign to help Mainers connect the dots of out of control military spending and failure to fund human needs like health care and education. PINK aprons and a war pie with a whopping 54% slice of discretionary federal budget help get the message out.

Look for BOW\$H in Albany at the National Peace Conference this weekend in a Saturday afternoon workshop with the National Priorities project and fellow "move the money" activists from Massachusetts.

On Sunday morning, join a panel discussion with Medea Benjamin, Glenn Ford, Kevin Zeese and Christine Gauvreau on “The Rise of Right Wing Populism & the Tea Party: Do We Need a Right-Left Coalition?” The deficit boogey man isn’t going away, and scare tactics continue to prepare working class people for measures like cutting Social Security. As keynote speaker Noam Chomsky has observed, we ignore fascist organizing of disaffected Americans in real economic distress at our peril.

Medea describes our choice this way: Rebuild America, or Bomb Afghanistan? Make sure your neighbors know there is a real choice, and a real price tag.

See you in Albany!

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