Exposing the True Costs of War and Militarism Since 1985
while Promoting a Sustainable and Peaceful World

VETERANS FOR PEACE

Organized locally. Recognized internationally.

VFP National Newsletter Spring 2026

Military Families Speak Out against War on Iran

ON MONDAY, APRIL 20, 2026, ten members of Military Families Speak Out (MFSO) were proud to join 140 veterans from About Face–Veterans Against the War, Veterans For Peace, 50501 Veterans, Common Defense, Center for Conscience and War, and Fayetteville Resistance Center in the Rotunda of the Cannon House Office Building in Washington, D.C., to call for Congress to end to the illegal, immoral U.S.-Israeli war on Iran. Each of us held a red tulip—an Iranian cultural symbol of mourning and sacrifice—in remembrance of the thousands of Iranians killed to date. Three Veterans performed a solemn flag-folding ceremony in memory of the 13 service members killed, followed by a bugler playing *Taps* that echoed soulfully throughout the Rotunda.

As the Capitol police began arrests, two MFSO members with a loved one in the Middle East gave speeches about what this illegal war means for them. Yadira Perez reflected on her experience that day: "[It was an] honor to go out to D.C. and stand in solidarity with military veterans and military family members in the Cannon Rotunda speaking out against this illegal, immoral Iran war. I am the mother of an Army Reserve Sergeant who has been in the military for 12 years and is currently deployed in the Middle East. I am a military family member who is speaking out against this administration.… [Our military service members] don't want to be associated with this Iran war and they don't want to be associated with the murder of over 170 school children. They don't want to be associated with the murder of thousands of innocent civilians. They wanted to serve our country. They had a purpose. They still have that purpose, but this isn't it. This war is not it."

Above: ***MFSO members Rosie Clemans-Cope, Nancy Lessin, Pat Alviso, Jeff Merrick, and Laurie Loving brought an important message to the Cannon Rotunda in Washington, D.C. on April 20. Pat and Jeff (a veteran) are longtime members of VFP as well.***

Left: ***MFSO members Jessica Serrato and Yadira Perez, whose loved one is serving in the Middle East, with Nancy Lessin.***

Military Families Speak Out began in 2002 with two military families speaking out to prevent a U.S. invasion of Iraq and grew to be the largest organization of military families speaking out against a war in the history of the country. We are grieved beyond words to see another unjustifiable war in the Middle East to which U.S. service members are deployed, and the destruction of people and infrastructure in Iran. We are grateful for our new members with active-duty troops who are speaking out so powerfully, and grateful to be acting in solidarity with About Face and Veterans For Peace, and all the veterans' organizations that were part of this profound action in Washington, D.C.

—Nancy Lessin

VETERANS FOR PEACE

VFP is a global organization of Military Veterans and allies whose collective efforts are to build a culture of peace by using our experiences and lifting our voices. We inform the public of the true causes of war and the enormous costs of wars, with an obligation to heal the wounds of wars. Our network is comprised of over 140 chapters worldwide whose work includes: educating the public, advocating for a dismantling of the war economy, providing services that assist veterans and victims of war, and most significantly, working to end all wars.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

We, as military veterans, do hereby affirm our greater responsibility to serve the cause of world peace. To this end we will work, with others both nationally and internationally

- To increase public awareness of the causes and costs of war.
- To restrain our governments from intervening, overtly and covertly, in the internal affairs of other nations.
- To resist racism and repression in our home communities.
- To oppose the militarization of law enforcement.
- To end the arms race and to reduce and eventually eliminate nuclear weapons.
- To seek justice for veterans and victims of war.
- To abolish war as an instrument of national policy.
- To promote a sustainable and peaceful world.

To achieve these goals, members of Veterans For Peace pledge to use non-violent means and to maintain an organization that is both democratic and open with the understanding that all members are trusted to act in the best interests of the group for the larger purpose of world peace. [amended Dec. 2024]

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The ***VFP National Newsletter,*** published 2-3 times a year, reflects the activities and projects of our members and chapters. VFP editor Becky Luening may be reached at editor@veteransforpeace.org. (Please refrain from adding this address to your listserv.)

Peace & Planet News, a National Project of VFP, is a newsmagazine and website dedicated to abolishing war, establishing justice, and fighting climate disaster. Find info and order bundles at ***peaceandplanetnews.org.***

For Veterans, Every Day Is Memorial Day

If we who have known war don't dedicate ourselves to ending it, who will?

SUSAN SCHNALL
President, Veterans For Peace National Board
[Photo: Phil Fransen]

ON MEMORIAL DAY, we paused to remember American service members who died during the nation's wars. We also remembered the astounding number of civilians who have perished in war. Since WWI there have been far more civilian deaths in each conflict than military deaths—and the ratio worsens by each conflict with each succeeding year. As we remember the soldiers, sailors, military members who have died in this nation's wars, we also reflect on the broken lives and communities that endure—here in this country, on this land, and abroad—paying the true costs of war.

For most Americans, Memorial Day is a three-day weekend signifying the beginning of summer. A weekend when we are told to drive carefully as we watch the news feed with thousands of motorists on the highway and listen to news reports of major traffic tie-ups and crowds at airports. And, of course, we see sales everywhere—as though one should celebrate the death of soldiers in wartime by buying clothes or a washing machine on sale. "Have a good Memorial Day" friends say to me—a good Memorial Day? Is it possible to have a good day when one is commemorating the war dead?

For veterans, every day is memorial day. Veterans know that war injures all who participate. It kills body and soul. It damages communities and families. It impacts generations.

And who profits? The war industry—the merchants of death that produce and distribute armaments. They rob us of social services that are life sustaining—our education, health care, housing—and use our resources for death and destruction. By valuing death over life, we have become the monster in the world that produces more armaments, more battleships, more drones, and the power to annihilate whole communities with the push of a button.

We are at war in this country, on this land. We see young lives destroyed and schoolchildren killed with impunity. We arm police departments with military weapons that destroy and kill. We let corporate greed poison our water and food supply. We starve our poor, denigrate them with substandard housing, substandard education, lack of decent job opportunities, and then offer them a way out by joining the military.

And we reward the rich by letting them buy political power with their economic wealth, so they can grab even more opportunities for power and money.

We who know the truth have a responsibility to share it with others, to organize, to lead the way toward a sustainable future. War and militarism have no place on a healthy planet.

Every day, I think of those lives changed forever by war and conflict, and, along with millions of others, rededicate myself to healing the wounds of war, to working for peace and social justice, to bringing an end to armed conflict, to moving us from a war economy to a peace economy. We must care for those harmed. We can prevent future harm by stopping this insanity called war. We must end support for those corporations dedicated to death and destruction and demand that our national wealth be spent on life-giving services.

The responsibility is ours, working in solidarity with veterans and civilians around the world touched by war. For, if we who have known war don't dedicate ourselves to ending it, who will?

—Susan

A Note of Gratitude

MICHAEL T. MCPHEARSON
Executive Director, Veterans For Peace

THANK YOU for your membership in Veterans For Peace. It shows you have chosen to live your stated values and to participate in making history rather than stand by and let history dictate our future. Thank you for continuing your service to the country and for working for peace and justice in service to humankind, all living things, and the planet.

By working to end war, you have taken on an enormous responsibility. As Dr. King said in his 1964 Nobel Prize lecture, referencing the enormous destructive power of today's weapons, ***"So if modern man continues to flirt unhesitatingly with war, he will transform his earthly habitat into an inferno such as even the mind of Dante could not imagine."***

Thank you for having the vision to recognize that VFP's overarching mission, "to abolish war as an instrument of national policy," while idealistic and, for many, an impossible goal, is imperative if humanity is to survive.

Hopefully, by the time you receive this newsletter, the Trump administration and the Iranian government will have reached a peace agreement. As I write this, headlines read, Reuters—"Trump to decide imminently on Iran deal, says Hormuz Strait Must Open"; Axios—"U.S. and Iran reach deal but need Trump's final approval, officials say"; *The New York Times*—"A Draft U.S.-Iran Plan Is Said to Be on the Table."

Unfortunately, we know that, whether the U.S. aggression against Iran has passed or not, war and intimidation by the U.S. as a tool of foreign policy will continue. While Trump has taken it to a new level, U.S. global violence is not new. We have been part of the machine that inflicts that violence, and as Veterans For Peace, we will continue to resist it and work toward a peaceful and just world.

Veterans For Peace members across the country continue to do powerful, meaningful work. You will see examples of members' efforts in the chapter reports pages of this newsletter. If you Google Veterans For Peace and click the news link, you will find several articles. The most recent covers our Memorial Day activities.

Veterans For Peace National collaborates closely with other veterans under the banner *Veterans Against Fascism.* These groups include About Face: Veterans Against the War, 50501 Veterans, Fayetteville Resistance Coalition, Center on Conscience and War, and Military Families Speak Out, as well as unaffiliated veterans. We've taken two highly visible actions together, and by the time you read this, a third will have taken place on July 4th. These collaborations reflect VFP's peace-at-home, peace-abroad framework, recognizing that U.S. wars abroad affect us here at home. Again, quoting Dr. King, this time from his April 15, 1967, speech to 125,000 people after a march from New York City's Central Park to the United Nations building: ***"The bombs in Vietnam explode at home, they destroy the hopes and possibilities for a decent America."*** Today, it's bombs in Iran; tomorrow, it could be in Cuba.

Although we live in a time of violence, hate, and growing authoritarianism, we also live in a time of great opportunity. Constant warfare since 1990 has made the U.S. public weary of war. The administration's lack of focus, incoherent foreign policy, and the economic impact of their current blunder have made people particularly unsupportive of these military actions. Already drained by COVID-driven inflation and burdened by an economy that demands hard work for little reward, U.S. Americans are looking for answers. These conditions provide anti-war and peace activists with opportunities we must not waste. The terms "forever wars" and "endless wars" are now used by people across the political spectrum. We must engage and, to the extent we can, build bridges and a broad community with all people who share an inclusive vision of humanity and agree that all people deserve respect and the preservation of their dignity.

Veterans For Peace's participation in Veterans Against Fascism reflects the understanding that to succeed against the growing trend of fascism, militarism, and hate, we must work together. However idealistic the slogan "The people united will never be defeated" may sound, it is true. The ancient counter-motto, "Divide and Conquer," traditionally attributed to Alexander the Great's father, Phillip II of Macedonia, is used to enormous effect by all manner of structures, from prisons and street gangs to local and national politics and empires. The only winning counter to this well-known tactic is unity.

Many veterans are disgusted by the wars and the rise of fascism. We, as veterans, must increase our visibility so other veterans know they have a home and a community where they can speak up and act. We want active-duty service members to know that if they decide to refuse illegal or immoral orders, many veterans understand and will support them.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR EFFORTS and for supporting Veterans For Peace. What we do now matters. Because of you, Veterans For Peace is making a difference.

—Michael

Growing Together, Building Power

ACROSS VETERANS FOR PEACE, we're seeing steady growth—not just in numbers, but in energy, organization, and global reach.

We're excited to share that veteran activists in the UK are in the early stages of re-forming as **VFP Britain**, rebuilding a presence that many of you will remember as VFP-UK. Stay tuned as that effort develops. At the same time, our international footprint continues to expand with the creation of **Chapter 261 in Zambia**, our first chapter on the African continent. A warm welcome to our Zambian veterans and comrades.

Here at home, we're also growing. New chapters have recently formed in **Mid-Hudson Valley**, **New York**, and **Homer, Alaska**, serving as a reminder that the desire for peace and justice is alive in communities large and small.

This momentum carries into our upcoming national convention, August 6–9 in Kansas City, Missouri. Thanks to the Kansas City Chapter for their tremendous work organizing what promises to be a powerful in-person gathering. The moments we spend together in K.C. will both strengthen relationships and sharpen our critical analysis, helping us to organize more effectively in the months ahead.

Our membership numbers continue to increase steadily, thanks in part to recent outreach efforts. But growth isn't just about bringing people in, it's about keeping folks connected. When members plug into chapters, projects, and working groups, they stay engaged. And when we're visible—out in our communities—that's when people find us. In recent months, VFP members have shown up and continue to show up, across the country at *No Kings* events, May Day rallies, Nakba Day commemorations, and countless local actions, bringing a clear message against war abroad and repression at home.

Today we have more ways than ever to stay connected and informed. Alongside communications from our national office, members can engage with *Peace & Planet News* (now published quarterly) and the *Veterans For Peace Radio Hour & Podcast*, available on most major podcast streaming platforms.

Let's be honest about what's driving this moment. The continued escalation of U.S. militarism and repression is provoking more questioning, organizing, and action than we have seen in years. Many of those finding their way to VFP—especially younger veterans and new activists—understand that unless and until we confront the root causes of war and injustice, we're only treating the symptoms.

JOSHUA SHURLEY
Membership Committee Chair and Vice President, Veterans For Peace

That's where Veterans For Peace comes in. No one does this work alone. As Helen Keller once said, ***"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."*** That spirit of solidarity is what sustains us, and what makes our work possible.

So, let's keep building. Keep organizing. Keep showing up.

Peace at home, peace abroad.

—Joshua

Let's keep it rolling! Donate to the VFP Billboard Campaign

Rory Fanning in Great Lakes, Illinois

WITH POWERFUL IMAGES, VFP billboards amplifying the "Refuse Illegal Orders" message give voice to what many of our members have manifested by their own conscientious objection and war resistance actions.

Resistance within the military played a huge role in ending the American War in Viet Nam. It can do the same now. Our job is to support and encourage that resistance.

VFP billboards have been placed near major military bases in Georgia, California, Virginia, New York, Illinois, Kentucky, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Tucson, and Puerto Rico! The message is being broadcast to active duty military personnel in the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines! And they are reaching out for help.

Let's keep this campaign rolling! Support the men and women on active duty who are wrestling with the biggest decisions in their lives. They will live with what they do now for the rest of their lives.

WATCH 3-MINUTE CAMPAIGN VIDEO

DONATE TO THIS CAMPAIGN

Setting Sail for the California Coast

The *Golden Rule* Peace Boat

THE HISTORIC Golden Rule peace boat is preparing for a 2026 California coastal journey connecting with communities through peace education and grassroots organizing to promote nuclear abolition and environmental justice.

Departing from her home port in Eureka in late May, the *Golden Rule* will first sail to San Diego, arriving by June 20 and remaining until July 5. As one of the largest military and nuclear-connected regions in the U.S., San Diego is the perfect setting for extended anti-nuclear outreach, public education, dockside events, sailing opportunities, and community collaborations.

From San Diego, the *Golden Rule* will head south to Ensenada, Mexico, to meet up and sail with our deported U.S. veterans, strengthening cross-border relationships grounded in peace and human dignity. The *Golden Rule* will then turn northward to begin a two-month voyage up the California coast, making many stops along the way.

[As this newsletter goes to press, the Golden Rule's summer voyage has been postponed. See note on p. 9]

Staying True to the Boat's Historic Mission

The *Golden Rule's* original 1958 mission remains at the center of this work. In 1958, four Quaker peace activists attempted to sail the 34-foot ketch into the U.S. nuclear testing zone in the Marshall Islands. Their arrest helped spark international resistance to atmospheric nuclear testing and contributed to the eventual Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

That voyage inspired generations of direct action at sea, including the founding vision that later became Greenpeace. Today, the *Golden Rule* continues as part of a wider international movement of nonviolent maritime action for peace, human dignity, and nuclear abolition.

Coming at a time of escalating global instability and renewed nuclear danger, the 2026 voyage serves to connect historic anti-nuclear resistance with present-day struggles against militarism, war, displacement, environmental destruction, and the expanding threat of nuclear escalation.

Fleet Week in San Diego
[Photo: Chris Stone/Times of San Diego]

International Solidarity

The *Golden Rule* is honored to have crew members and supporters who have volunteered with the international Gaza flotilla movement coordinating nonviolent action by land, sea, and across borders to challenge Israel's siege of Gaza and support Palestinian human rights sovereignty. The peace boat's summer voyage will express our solidarity with the Palestinian people, and with the people of Venezuela and Cuba, who are resisting U.S. military intervention and naval blockades.

We will protest the extrajudicial killings of nearly 180 people in boat strikes carried out by the U.S. in the Caribbean and Pacific.

The voyage will also reflect VFP's opposition to the dangerous, ongoing U.S./Israeli war on Iran, where two heavily–nuclear-armed states are attacking a nonnuclear state purportedly to prevent its hypothetical future development of nuclear weapons. Furthering the irony are growing concerns that Israel or the U.S. might actually use nuclear weapons against Iran.

These growing connections reflect our project's place in an expanding global community using maritime action, public witness, and people-powered organizing to stand for peace and the protection of life across the globe.

continued on page 9…

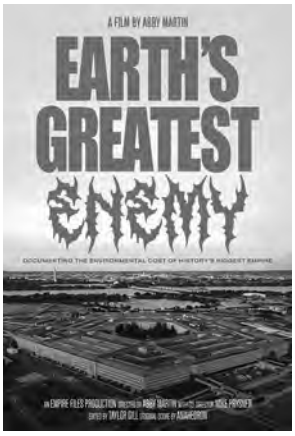
Climate Crisis & Militarism

THE CLIMATE CRISIS & MILITARISM PROJECT (CCMP) is part of the world-wide movement to mitigate the climate crisis and promote peace and justice (climate, racial and economic). As educators and activists, we focus on U.S. militarism's damage to the climate:

- **its vast and largely unreported greenhouse gas emissions;**
- **its role as military protection for oil corporations;**
- **its squandering of trillions needed for addressing climate and people's needs; and**
- **its promotion of war—a human, climate and environmental disaster.**

CCMP members have been engaging in public outreach activities to call attention to the links between militarism and climate, and the environmental damages it causes, while the U.S. is involved in or supporting three ongoing wars, in Iran, Ukraine, and Gaza.

Recent CCMP outreach efforts include tabling at screenings of Abby Martin's documentary, ***Earth's Greatest Enemy,*** and our visibility at Earth Day events in St. Paul, Minnesota, and Detroit, Michigan.



Banner displayed at NO KINGS III rally in Detroit and used in WAKE UP & NO MAS tours. The background scenes depict Gaza on the left and Altadena, CA on the right.

CCMP steering committee member Barry Riesch, of St. Paul, Minnesota, has been out front, speaking to a crowd of 15,000 at the 2025 Twin Cities Earth Day event, and showing up in national video coverage of the March 28 *No Kings* rally held at the Minnesota State Capitol this spring, attended by an estimated 200,000 people. [More on Barry Reisch's Twin Cities activism can be found in the Chapter 27 report on page 17.]

In addition to tabling and taking our messages to *No Kings* rallies and antiwar protests, CCMP members have been busy organizing Tours #2 and #3 of the ***Wake Up to Climate Crisis & NO MAS Tour 2025–2026*** [NO MAS = No Military Air Shows], which start May 1 in Charleston, South Carolina, and ends a week after July 4 in Brunswick, Maine. These tours follow on last year's Tour #1, which took us to many cities in California, where we protested Military Air Shows, spoke at gatherings, and hosted showings of *Earth's Greatest Enemy.*

Since CCMP started in 2020, we have hosted over 150 slideshow presentations to diverse groups, highlighting the military's contribution to the climate crisis. During this time, we have witnessed the exacerbation of the climate crisis and the movement's struggle to keep the climate issue on the front burner. On the other hand, we are seeing many more people and groups act on the link between militarism and the climate crisis, a positive trend in which CCMP has definitely played a part.

Help Grow Climate+Militarism Consciousness

>>Check the Climate Crisis & Militarism Project website to keep abreast of ongoing activities and events, and find our tour schedule: ***veteransforpeace.org/ccmp***.

>>Scan the QR code below to sign onto the 350.org–VFP petition to the Secretaries of the U.S. Navy and U.S. Air Force to end the use of active duty war planes for entertainment.

—James (Jim) M. Rine, Ph.D.

SIGN THE PETITION TO THE NAVY AND AIR FORCE: CANCEL AIR SHOWS!

PEACE & PLANET NEWS SPECIAL EDITION ON MILITARISM & CLIMATE (PDF)

Korea Peace Campaign

KOREA PEACE CAMPAIGN (KPC) is the longest, active VFP National Project, started in 2002. Its mission is to achieve a peaceful end to the lingering, costly Korean War; heal the wounds of the war; and promote reconciliation and friendship between American and Korean people.

Advocating against the Winter U.S.–South Korea Joint War Drills

The so-called "Freedom Shield" (FS) military exercise, one of the largest, joint, combined U.S. war drills in the world, took place in South Korea from March 9 to March 19 this year. About 20,000 South Korean troops and an undisclosed number of U.S. troops (8th Army, 11th Airborne Division from Alaska) participated in the winter war drills focused on computer command and control, as well as field trainings. Based on past records, the estimated number of U.S. troops involved in the winter war drills is 20,000.

North Korea condemned the joint war drills as a rehearsal for a surprise invasion against it, and conducted its own missile launch drills during the same period. South Korean peace groups also condemned the large-scale joint war drills, which inevitably increase military tensions on the Korean Peninsula. In the U.S., some 100 peace groups issued an open letter at the end of February, urging the U.S. to cancel the provocative, costly military drills. The cosponsors of the letter included Veterans For Peace, World Beyond War, Women Cross DMZ, Pax Christi USA, Peace Action New York State, CodePink, Answer Coalition, Nodutdol for Korean Community Development, and others.

It is interesting to note that the U.S. military moved some of its Patriot and THAAD anti-missile batteries from South Korea to the Middle East during these war drills in South Korea. This indicates that the U.S. will be now more flexible in using Korea-based troops and military assets for other hot spots in the world.

International People's Tribunal (IPT) on the Atomic Bombings—An Update

VFP is one of a dozen international partner groups supporting this historic International People's Tribunal (IPT), launched in 2024 by surviving South Korean atomic bomb victims and supporting groups in Hiroshima. (Some 40,000 Koreans living in Hiroshima and Nagasaki were estimated killed.) They are seeking an official apology and just compensation from the U.S. government. The IPT Organizing Committee originally planned to hold the tribunal in New York this year. However, due to the increasing difficulty of visiting the U.S. for foreigners nowadays, the IPT venue has been changed to Seoul. The tribunal will be held at a Korean university November 13–15, 2026.

Ann Wright, KPC Coordinator and VFP Advisory Board member, will provide her reflection on the testimony of the Korean atomic bomb victims in the tribunal. The five judges selected for the IPT include professors **Richard Falk** (retired), and **Marjorie Cohn** (retired). The event will be streamed online for the international community. To learn more about the IPT, please visit the official website at ***abombtribunal.campaignus.me.***

Fundraising Continues for Building the Hyosun-Miseon Memorial Archive

As mentioned in the Fall/Winter VFP newsletter, we have been raising funds for construction of a Hyosun-Miseon Memorial Archive next to the Hyosun-Miseon Peace Park in South Korea. Concerned South Korean civic groups are planning to complete the archive building by 2027. Its purpose is to preserve documents, pictures, videos, etc., relating to the two Korean middle school girls who were crushed to death by a U.S. Army armored vehicle moving on a countryside road, as well as the Korean people's candlelight movement for justice that arose in South Korea, after all charges against the vehicle's crew were dismissed in a U.S. Army court-martial. The two soldiers involved were promptly sent back to the United States. South Korea had no jurisdiction to try the case because the U.S. refused to turn over the two soldiers to the South Korean judicial system.

SPARK, a Korean NGO, sponsored a workshop on April 30 for NGOs on Justice for Korean A-Bomb Victims during the 2026 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) at UN Headquarters in New York. Two Korean victims—one first generation and another second generation—spoke, along with representatives of supporting NGOs.

Fundraising *…continued from previous page*

KPC has raised about $1,000 so far for the memorial archive fund, but would appreciate additional donations from individuals, local VFP chapters, and VFP National to show our solidarity with the Korean people. Our fundraising drive will continue until the end of July 2026. If you are interested in helping out, please click on the big Donate button on our campaign web page at ***veteransforpeace.org/korea-peace-campaign*** or mail a check to the VFP office with a memo entry for the Korea Peace Campaign.

U.S. Out of Korea Campaign

In March 2026, in response to our project's recommendation, Veterans For Peace endorsed the "U.S. Out of Korea Campaign." This campaign has already been endorsed by U.S. peace and justice groups including CodePink, World Beyond War, Answer Coalition, Black Alliance for Peace, and others. As a next step, the group plans to send a peace delegation to South Korea in August 2026. Find more information at ***usoutofkorea.org***.

KPC Online Meetings

Monthly online KPC project meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month, at 8pm ET, 5pm PT. At our April 14 meeting, special guest speaker Yeshua Moser, the Asia Landmine Researcher for the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, gave an informative presentation about the landmine situation in Korea. Yeshua pointed out that the many Korean victims of U.S. landmines in Korea are not receiving any assistance from the U.S. government. Any VFP members or friends who are interested in attending future meetings are welcome to contact us at **kpc@veteransforpeace.org** for the meeting link.

End the Forever U.S. War in Korea!

—John, Ann, and Ellen

The *Golden Rule* (from page 6)

Special emphasis is being placed on the August 6–9 commemorations marking the U.S. atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. During those same dates, Veterans For Peace will gather for its 2026 national convention at the University of Missouri–Kansas City under the theme, *Peace Through Nonviolent Action: From Chaos to Community.*

The convention's focus on nonviolent organizing, media strategy, community building, inclusivity, and collaboration across movements strongly reflects the living mission of the *Golden Rule* Peace Boat Project. From dockside conversations and public education to sailing with youth, veterans, faith leaders, environmental organizers, and peace activists, the *Golden Rule* continues to open up spaces where people can imagine a future beyond war and nuclear violence.

Organizers hope the simultaneous presence of Veterans For Peace in both Kansas City and along the California coast will strengthen national visibility for nuclear abolition and help connect local struggles into a larger movement for peace and collective action.

The *Golden Rule* project committee is grateful to all who, for the last 11 years, have helped organize events, volunteered as crew, and donated funds. It is thanks to your efforts that, the *Golden Rule* will continue to sail for a nuclear-free world and a peaceful, sustainable future.

—Michelle Kanoe-Lehua Marsonette
Golden Rule Project Manager

For updates, volunteer opportunities, sailing collaborations, or media inquiries, please contact Michelle at:
541-971-9077
vfpgoldenruleproject@gmail.com

2026 California *Golden Rule* Voyage Postponed

Due to unexpected boat repairs, the Golden Rule summer voyage on the California coast is postponed and the schedule will have to be revised—probably to mid-July thru August.

Check our website for updates:
www.vfpgoldenruleproject.org

SAVE OUR VA

HONOR THE NATION'S PROMISE TO VETERANS

SOVA needs your help.

THE VA HEALTHCARE SYSTEM IS UNDER SIEGE. VA Secretary Collins has already eliminated 40,000 positions, despite the fact that the VA Inspector General's annual staffing report found that the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) facilities reported 4,434 severe occupational staffing shortages in FY 2025, a 50% increase from FY 2024. All 139 VHA facilities reported shortages, with 94% facing severe medical officer vacancies and 79% facing nurse shortages (VA OIG Report 25-01135-196). This staffing shortage is putting veterans' physical and mental well-being at risk.

Unfortunately, Secretary Collins has allies in Congress who are working hard to divert taxpayers' dollars to the private sector. There are several pieces of legislation that, if enacted, will make the situation worse. Even though many independent peer-reviewed studies clearly demonstrate that VA care is equal to and often superior to private-sector care, as well as being more cost effective, many in Congress are bent on undermining the VA by pushing more veterans into the Community Care Program.[1]

Compounding this is the shortage of private-sector healthcare providers in the U.S. Every state suffers from provider shortages, and this is especially true in rural areas. The Veterans Healthcare Policy Institute published a comprehensive state-by-state analysis of these shortages.[2]

If this ongoing effort to privatize VA Healthcare is not halted and reversed, by the end of the current administration the damage done to the VA might be so severe that it will be extremely difficult, if not impossible to reverse. This will do irreparable harm to current and future veterans.

Convincing Congress to reject harmful legislation and to support bills favorable to the VA is the only hope we have of saving the one federal department dedicated to those who served. We in SOVA, along with allies such as the Veterans Healthcare Policy Institute have been waging a campaign to stop privatization, **but we need your help.** You can help us in three ways.

Arlys Herem and Jeff Roy met with Senator Tina Smith as part of SOVA efforts to convince Congress of the need to support the VA.

» First, we post letters—labeled Calls to Action (CTA)—to members of Congress (MOC) on our webpage every three weeks. It only takes **a few moments of your time to send these CTAs** to the appropriate congressperson. One of the most effective ways to influence Congress is through constituent mail. Please help us dramatically increase the number of VFP members who send our CTAs to their representatives.

» SOVA arranges Zoom conference calls with MOCs and their staff. **We need congressional-district constituents to assist us** with this as MOCs generally require a constituent to be on the call. You needn't worry about your level of awareness of the issues. We will be on the call with you and provide background and assistance.

» **SOVA needs contacts in all VFP chapters who will provide information to chapter members on privatization.** We have some contacts, and Greg Miller is spearheading the effort to establish more. If you are willing to assist in this, please contact Greg at **brogregm@sbcglobal.net.**

—Bruce Carruthers

1 A list of the VA Healthcare Studies can be found on the Veterans Healthcare Policy Institute website: ***www.veteranspolicy.org/document-quality***

2 See *Comprehensive National Analysis on Private Care Gaps:* ***www.veteranspolicy.org/journalism-and-commentary/press-release/vhpi-releases-comprehensive-national-analysis-on-private-care-gaps***

UNIFIED U.S. DEPORTED VETERANS RESOURCE CENTER WEBSITE

Deported Veterans Advocacy

Tijuana Operations Update

DUE TO CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES and funding constraints, the DVAP office in Tijuana has begun scaling down its operations. While services are now offered on a limited schedule, the office remains committed to supporting deported veterans both in person and virtually.

Continued Service to Deported Veterans

Although there has not been a significant recent increase in deportations, the need for services remains steady. Requests for assistance continue to come through Veterans For Peace and through our website, particularly in the areas of claims support and legal advocacy. The DVAP team remains actively engaged in responding to these needs.

IMMVI Program Status

The IMMVI program has remained largely inactive in recent months, with delayed responses to pending re-parole cases. This ongoing uncertainty highlights the importance of maintaining operational readiness. At any given moment, deportations may increase, requiring immediate and expanded support for affected veterans.

Sustaining Presence and Pastoral Care

Retired U.S. Army Lt. Col. Robert Blessing, an Iraq War combat chaplain, has consistently crossed the border for over a year to support DVAP's mission. His presence has been instrumental in sustaining operations and providing essential spiritual care to deported veterans.

In addition to his pastoral work, Lt. Col. Blessing has played a significant role in outreach to the conservative community in San Diego, advocating for legislative reform to address the injustice of deporting veterans who once served in defense of the United States. The photo of Lt. Col. Blessing standing alongside deported veterans and advocates at our Tijuana office is a testament to his ongoing work and presence.

At the entrance of the Tijuana office (L to R): Megan Day, law fellow with the Immigrant Defenders Law Center (ImmDef); self-deported-after-repatriation U.S. Army veteran Ruben Robles; deported U.S. Army veteran and DVAP Office Coordinator Rocky Hernandez; and U.S. Army Chaplain Col. (Ret.) Robert Blessing.

Commitment Moving Forward

DVAP remains steadfast in its commitment to keeping the Tijuana office open for as long as veterans are in need and resources allow. The continued generosity and support of partners and donors are essential to sustaining this mission.

—Robert Vivar

Although our Viet Nam Full Disclosure Campaign is currently inactive, VFP members continue to actively speak their truths about that war and its meaning for today's resistance movement. On May 18, 2026, in Los Angeles, five of our members—Susan Schnall, Bill Short*, Keith Mather, Randy Rowland, and Hal Muskat—were guests at a special 20th anniversary screening of* Sir! No Sir!, *the award-winning film about G.I. resistance during the Vietnam war, in which they all had a part. Director David Zeiger was there, along with two special guests, author Viet Thanh Nguyen, and VFP Advisory Board member Jane Fonda (left), who also appears in the film. VFP presented Jane with a plaque in appreciation of her support for veterans both during and since the American war in Viet Nam, and for her ongoing outspokenness on peace and climate issues. Joshua Shurley brought one of VFP's "Refuse Illegal Orders" banners to the event, which was set up in front of the stage and displayed to the packed house during post-film Q&A. [Photo: Hal Muskat]

*Bill Short is co-creator/director, along with Willa Seidenberg, of ***A Matter of Conscience*** podcast, accessible at ***amatterofconscience.com.***

Uranium Weapons

THE URANIUM WEAPONS Working Group (UWWG), co-chaired by John Wilks and Damacio Lopez, has met weekly for over two years, producing scientific research and commentary by an international membership including researchers, scientists, chemists, psychologists, writers, victims of deployment diseases, and activists. Contact us at: duworkgroup@proton.me

Mission

This VFP working group condemns all use of uranium weapons by any actor, under any circumstance.

Projects

Debunking the term, "depleted" in naming radioactive materials was a major project: Please see our "Myth Paper," ***The Myth of the Safety of "Depleted" Uranium (DU),*** at ***bit.ly/42NPeD3***.

The deadliest element, Plutonium, has been found on every continent. No safe level of exposure exists.

The Arthur Ratcliffe Mobile Community Laboratory allows every community to request accurate spectrometer analysis measuring Ionizing Radiation in soil, water and air. The Lab provides training in preparation of collected samples for professional Mass Spectrometry analysis, and returns results to the requesting community. Chapters 63 and 55 are co-sponsors of the Lab, owned and managed by the UW Working Group with funding by private donations and grants.

The International Commission on Radiation Risk (ICRR). For over 80 years the nuclear industry has relied upon arbitrary mathematics to determine a "safe" level of exposure to radiation.

Research conducted by our members has revealed dangerously inadequate radiation risk assessments that are deficient by at least 1,000%, requiring their immediate replacement.

Further analysis shows that at least 500,000,000 human beings have perished under the fatally flawed risk model.

Letters have been sent to regulatory agencies demanding re-evaluation of their statements on safety standards for workers and the public in areas in and surrounding nuclear power stations, waste storage areas, military weapons sites, and testing ranges.

The project's purpose is replacement of current nuclear safety policies in light of rigorous peer-reviewed chemistry, physics and epidemiology on cancer clusters and infant deaths in proximity to nuclear military and industrial sites. There is abundant evidence of massive harm to the public over many decades from routine nuclear operations, testing, fallout, accidents and spills.

We call for rigorous oversight of political and corporate corruption, public-private "partnerships," and uranium mining, transportation, processing and manufacturing. To this end we are engaging national and international policy-makers, all relevant agencies, pro- and anti-nuclear groups, and the public.

—Hollis Higgins, Peter Aronson, Peter Barus
May Day 2026

Michael Ketterer and Brian Wilcox (top left) and glimpses of the Ratcliffe Lab, inside and out.

Conscientious Resistance

"Support. Resist. Heal."

CONSCIENTIOUS RESISTANCE Working Group (CRWG) works to support military members and veterans navigating questions of conscience and war, strengthen resources for service members resisting unlawful orders or pursuing conscientious objection, and foster healing from moral injury for veterans and their families.

At a memorial demonstration honoring Aaron Bushnell on January 25, Jim Dorenkott delivered a deeply moving reflection on moral injury, drawing a clear connection between U.S. Airman Aaron Bushnell's self-immolation in protest of U.S. complicity in genocide and moral injury. The connection is clear that the continued issuance of unlawful and morally compromising orders will only intensify these wounds—compounding moral injury and leaving lasting, lifelong impacts on those asked to carry them out. Jim emphasized that without trusted, supportive spaces where service members can safely question, reflect, and seek guidance, such harm will persist. If Aaron Bushnell had had access to a moral injury support group where veterans could safely share their feelings, perhaps he would still be with us. Perhaps he would have found an alternative to self-immolation.

The CRWG continues to focus on developing resources for Moral Injury, and to provide space for supportive conversations during our monthly meetings. Additionally, we continue to coordinate with the National Network for Opposing Militarization of Youth (NNOMY), the Project on Youth and Non-military Opportunities (Project YANO), and other counter-recruitment groups to fight the increasing militarization of schools and communities. CRWG coordinator Aneesa Ahad participated in the NNOMY Counter-Recruitment Webinar on March 21 [watch the video at ***youtu.be/ltbDBIam7L4***].

Upcoming efforts include a screening and facilitated discussion of the film *What I Want You To Know*, as well as the continued development of support plans and resources for military members who are questioning or resisting unlawful orders. The CRWG is part of a broader network of groups and organizations working collaboratively to address these critical issues.

—Aneesa Ahad

CRWG meets online every second Sunday of the month at 4pm Pacific Time, 6pm Central, 7pm Eastern, etc. For more information, or to request the monthly meeting Zoom link, email **conscientiousresistance@gmail.com**.

Be the Change Book Club

VFP'S "BE THE CHANGE" BOOK CLUB Working Group, founded in 2020, meets virtually once or twice monthly on Sunday afternoons to explore, in a safe and open social space, the ways in which colonization, racism, gender bias, and other biases show up in our lives and in our activism. Our discussions are geared toward personal and organizational growth, reflective of the VFP mission of "building a culture of peace."

SCAN TO SIGN UP

The latest title taken up by our book discussion group is *An African American and Latinx History of the United States* by Paul Ortiz, Professor of Labor History and Latino/a Studies at Cornell University. A member of VFP, Ortiz is to be featured at our national convention this summer, in conversation with labor organizer Chris Smalls and VFP Advisory Board member Margaret

Stevens, who is also a history professor. Ortiz says his book is rooted significantly in his experiences in U.S. Special Forces in Central America in the mid-1980s. As readers, we are finding the history he relates all too reminiscent of today's struggles, and gaining knowledge of and appreciation for what he terms *emancipatory internationalism.*

China Working Group

THE CHINA WORKING GROUP is a space for mutual education and exchange of information on China–U.S. relations, as well as China's relations with other countries, particularly in Asia. We currently have 30 members in our list, although not all are active participants with the group.

China Working Group co-chair Michael Wong speaking at a demonstration against Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi's escalation of U.S. tensions with China over Taiwan Island, August 1, 2022.

Recent Accomplishments

In the last year: we arranged for **KJ Noh** to speak at our VFP National Convention; interviewed various experts on China and international relations on our YouTube channel [**youtube.com/@veteransforpeacewithchina5667**]; supported book author Dee Knight's tour of the San Francisco Bay Area [**deeknight.blog/befriendingchina**], and continued to engage both the Chinese-American and the peace community. Three of our members, **Sara Flounders, Michael Kramer,** and **KJ Noh,** were published in a new anthology on today's China, entitled ***China Changes Everything***. We regularly update our page on the VFP National website: **www.veteransforpeace.org/our-work/working-groups/china-working-group**

2026 China Tour

The China Working Group is sponsoring a tour to China in October, during which we will visit Beijing, Nanjing, Chengdu, and Urumqi. Urumqi is in Xinjiang, where the U.S. media and some officials and U.S.-based NGOs have falsely accused China of committing genocide against the Muslim Uyghurs. However, the Uyghurs (about 60% of Xinjiang's population, which includes several other ethnic minorities) have actually increased their population faster than the Han Chinese, Xinjiang's economy is thriving, and the Uyghurs are in the temples practicing their religion and out going about living normal lives. Unlike Gaza, Xinjiang is wide open and millions of tourists from all over the world (including the Muslim world) go there every year. We are going there to see for ourselves. For tour information and to apply, email the Veterans For Peace China Working Group: ***vfpchinaworkinggroup@veteransforpeace.org***

Challenging U.S. Imperialism

During Obama's "Pivot To Asia," the U.S. moved 60% of our naval force to surround China, built up bases around China, pressured Asian allies and neutral countries to join us against China, and formed and/or strengthened our military alliances against China. Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Taiwan island, Australia, New Zealand, and India have all been pressured to join the U.S. campaign and to increase their defense spending and military coordination. Other Asian nations have been pressured as well, but some—like Viet Nam, Singapore, and Thailand—have resisted, or have engaged with both sides but taken a neutral position. India gives a mixed response, but the Philippines has allowed the U.S. military to reestablish military bases there and to sell them new arms. NATO nations—the same nations that invaded China during the Colonial Period and chopped China up into colonies—have sent warships to join the U.S. in naval exercises around China's coasts in shows of traditional Western "gunboat diplomacy." They simply changed their tune from fighting for "Christianity" to fighting for "freedom and democracy." We call it what it is: *Imperialism.*

Do we have the peace inside ourselves to power the peace our world desperately needs?

Veterans For *Inner* Peace

Peace Education Program for Veterans

A growing number of veterans say the Peace Education Program is a helpful tool to harness their own inner strength and overcome their obstacles. The innovative series of facilitated video-based workshops helps participants discover their inner resources for personal growth and well-being.

The workshops focus on ten themes: Peace, Appreciation, Inner strength, Self-awareness, Clarity, Understanding, Dignity, Choice, Hope and Contentment.

Each session features empowering course content derived from the insightful presentations of renowned author and peace educator, Prem Rawat.

The program is applicable cross-culturally, having been implemented in more than 80 countries and 45 languages. 640,000 people have taken the program across the world, reporting a wide range of benefits.

The Prem Rawat Foundation makes the Peace Education Program available to individuals and organizations free of charge.

If you are a veteran or the spouse of a veteran, you are welcome to register for an upcoming virtual course. The next one begins Thursday, June 18, and enrollees have the choice of meeting at 4:00pm or 7:00pm (Eastern Time). Contact us at the Veterans For Inner Peace Working Group email to register for that course or a later one, or for more information: ***Peace4VeteransClass@gmail.com***

Post-9/11 Veterans Launch Occupation Response Webinars

MEMBERS OF THE VFP Post-9/11 Veterans Caucus have been hosting every-other-month "Occupation Response Webinars" (ORW), a series of skill-building sessions to help coordinate timely nonviolent responses to national and international events in our communities.

ORW#1, January 24, featured: Jack Holmgren, a former immigration attorney spearheading community building and protection in California, and VFP member Marie Purcell, a conscientious objector with expertise in ground-level resistance and reporting in Minneapolis.

For **ORW#2, March 21** [viewable at youtu.be/YY224gij1Ro] Marie Purcell was joined by three other activists: Lt. Col. Anthony Aguilar (ret.) a former U.S. Army Special Forces officer turned whistleblower who exposed war crimes at Gaza humanitarian aid sites; Joy Metzler, Air Force vet turned conscientious objector in protest of the U.S.-backed genocide in Gaza, who has been active addressing twin crises of imperialism and fascism within the U.S.; and Jill Garvey, prominent racial justice and democracy activist and co-founder/director of States at the Core (STAC).

ORW#3, May 23, on the intersection of veteran fights and immigrant rights, featured: Melissa Chaudhry, organizer and congressional candidate, who with spouse Zahid Chaudhry, a disabled Army veteran targeted and detained by ICE for months, highlighted DHS's systemic abuse of veterans and immigrants; Demi Palecek, an Air Force and Army National Guard veteran and congressional candidate known for advocacy work around immigrant rights, transgender rights, and sexual harassment in the military; and Dylan Blaha, an Army National Guard vet, activist and congressional candidate in Illinois focused on combating authoritarianism, oligarchy, and kleptocracy.

Los Angeles VFP sets up every Saturday and Sunday on the boardwalk at Venice Beach.

#001 Maine
The Tom Sturdevant Chapter

The Maine chapter continues to aid and support local activists to get a red flag law passed in Maine. Support was provided in legislative sessions around gun violence prevention with the Maine Gun Safety Coalition.

We cohosted a sold-out showing of Abby Martin's film, *Earth's Greatest Enemy,* which included a Q&A with her afterward, via Zoom.

The second annual *Doug Rawlings Education Fund for Peace* scholarship was awarded to a wonderful young man heading to Carleton College this fall.

We had a good presence in the local Memorial Day parade. It was a very damp, rainy morning, and members were quite wet at the finish, but feeling good for having had this presence in the parade for many years.

In July we will yet again protest the Navy recruiting tactic known as the Blue Angels at the Brunswick Executive Airport. The VFP *No MAS* [Military Air Shows] committee will be in attendance and another showing of Abby Martin's film is planned.

Richard Clement

#007 Los Angeles

Every weekend, you can find Jerry Van, Michael Lindley, Steve Davis, and me, Ed Ellis, hanging out at Venice Beach, talking to passersby about the present political situation in the United States and the world. Steve Davis (a good artist!) drew maps of nine different countries where a conflict exists or who are threatened by our government. Venice is an international destination and many foreigners stop to talk politics and educate us about their country. They love the maps, and they recognize veterans as a good source of truth. Clay Clairborne, another VFPLA member, sets up next to us with his display supporting the people of Palestine by showing the damage (horror, destruction), they have endured from Israeli aggression. He has filmed some interesting interactions between those who support and recognize the Palestinian people and those who support Israel, which can be viewed on YouTube.

Other members who visit from time to time include Kathleen Hernandez, Steve Bowers, Kenny White, and Roxanne Kaimi. We have lost many members these past 10 years—*Presente!*—and we have others who are ill. We hold all of them in our hearts. All will never be forgotten. We have been blessed to know each other. We carry on.

Ed Ellis, Chapter Treasurer

#010 Albany, New York

Chapter 10 has been busy hosting screenings of *Earth's Greatest Enemy,* the excellent documentary by Abby Martin, and we used this film to encourage folks to turn out at a Hancock Field Action for Earth Day. The film was shown at three locations including SUNY Albany, Albany Friends Meeting, and Bethlehem Library in Delmar followed by useful discussions on the climate

and the effects of militarism. Organizing took place in other Upstate New York cities as well, with significant effort put in by Jack Gilroy and Binghamton VFP Chapter 90, which also showed the film. Over 120 folks, many of them younger college students, came to Hancock's main gate to vigil. Supporting organizations included Upstate Drone Action, Pax Christi Upstate New York, UNAC, the Downtown Berrigan Collective from Ithaca, and others. John Amidon and a young woman from Rochester climbed atop the Hancock Field sign. Surprisingly, neither the Air Force nor the local police responded to their presence.

John Amidon

VFP Chapter 23 turned out for the No Kings rally in Rochester, New York. [Photo: Liz Henderson]

#023 Rochester, New York

Chapter 23 has not been deterred by this spring's raw weather. Far from it.

The bulk of our recent work has been on the streets of Rochester. The March 28 *No King*s effort saw us in a downtown park on a cold, windy day, carrying the VFP flag and staffing a shelter as a kind of refuge.

On a smaller scale, we've joined weekly pickets against Trumpism in an affluent suburb—and witnessed overwhelming public support. It's all about keeping the faith.

Immigrant rights: This month we took part in a Good Friday service/demo at the local Customs and Border Patrol installation. Led by local religious communities, this was "a gathering…rooted in love and seeking another pathway through stories of humanity, the power of prayer, and silence."

On April 8 we joined a downtown picket to send a message to a local Congressmember: no war against Iran, or Lebanon, or the Palestinian people. In short, *U.S. out of the Middle East.*

Educational programs: We recently cosponsored screenings of the documentary, *Earth's Greatest Enemy,* which as producers say, "confronts…the U.S. military …the single largest institutional consumer of fossil fuels on the planet" and a worldwide destroyer of ecosystems.

Recently, the Monroe County (New York) Legislature honored our chapter with a proclamation that notes our chapter's work for peace in the community and for our support of veterans. [*See photo on back page.*]

Jack Spula, Chapter ExCom Member-at-large

#025 Southern Wisconsin Clarence Kailin Chapter

Memorial Day is central to the outreach efforts of our chapter, and each year we put much work and energy into two public events. On the day itself we provide a public memorial service featuring music, an important speaker, and tabling by several peace organizations. This year the speaker was VFP National Board President Susan Schnall, and as always, we had a great turnout.

Since 2007, for the week preceding Memorial Day, we set up Memorial Mile: silhouettes of tombstones in ranks of five, closely spaced, extending about half a mile, in a park alongside a major thoroughfare. Many people from the community help to set it up and take it down. Signage and a kiosk provide our commentary. This display has a deep impact on the public, and we receive much thoughtful attention every year.

continued on page 18…

VFP Chapter 25 members Steve Books, Phil Fransen, and Brad Geyer at this year's Miracle Mile *display in Madison, Wisconsin.*

Barry Riesch (in photo, far left) arrived early and positioned himself near the stage at the huge, livestreamed Minnesota* No Kings *rally, where he stook for hours with a VFP flag and his sign demanding Justice for Renee Good and Alex Pretti, the Minnesota community members murdered by ICE.

VFP Chapter 27 member Dave Logsdon shows off the massive banner displayed on the side of the chapter's Peace Bus at Minneapolis Open Streets this spring. [Photo: Mike McDonald]

#025 – Southern Wisconsin continued

Our other efforts include awarding peace scholarships to graduating high school seniors, organizing a popular book club, and helping with a film group. We table at Madison's Farmers Market every Saturday morning in season, chatting with many of the thousands of people there. We also tabled at the March 28 *No Kings* event, and we often speak at events for local peace organizations. We are notably present at events for Gaza and against warmongering by our country.

In addition to our work, we enjoy a monthly social get-together at a local restaurant, during which we solve all the world's problems.…

Larry Orr, Chapter Reporter

#027 Twin Cities, Minnesota

Chapter 27 continues to vigil and protest ICE's occupation of the Bishop H. Whipple Federal Building at Ft. Snelling, Minnesota.

Barry Riesch conducted a Veterans Memorial Service for Alex Pretti on February 6, honoring him for his life and work for veterans at the Minneapolis VA. Renee Good's life was also in their hearts. Barry and Strong Buffalo, poet and fellow veteran member of chapter 27, both spoke.

The Minneapolis *No Kings* event was huge, drawing 200,000 people and some big names: Bruce Springsteen, Jane Fonda, Joan Baez, and Bernie Sanders. Associate member Larry Long also got to sing. Barry Riesch arrived early and was able to position himself, with a VFP flag, near the front of the gathering; he was spotted several times when the livestream panned the crowd. Chapter 27 members set up their VFP Peace Bus with a mic and amp, providing an all-day open-mic opportunity.

Barry Riesch

Scan the QR code to access the three-part video of the Alex Pretti memorial spearheaded by Chapter 27's Barry Riesch in Minneapolis.

#034 New York City

NYC Chapter hosts online monthly Zoom meetings with interesting speakers, as well as in-person events regarding current peace, environmental, and social justice issues.

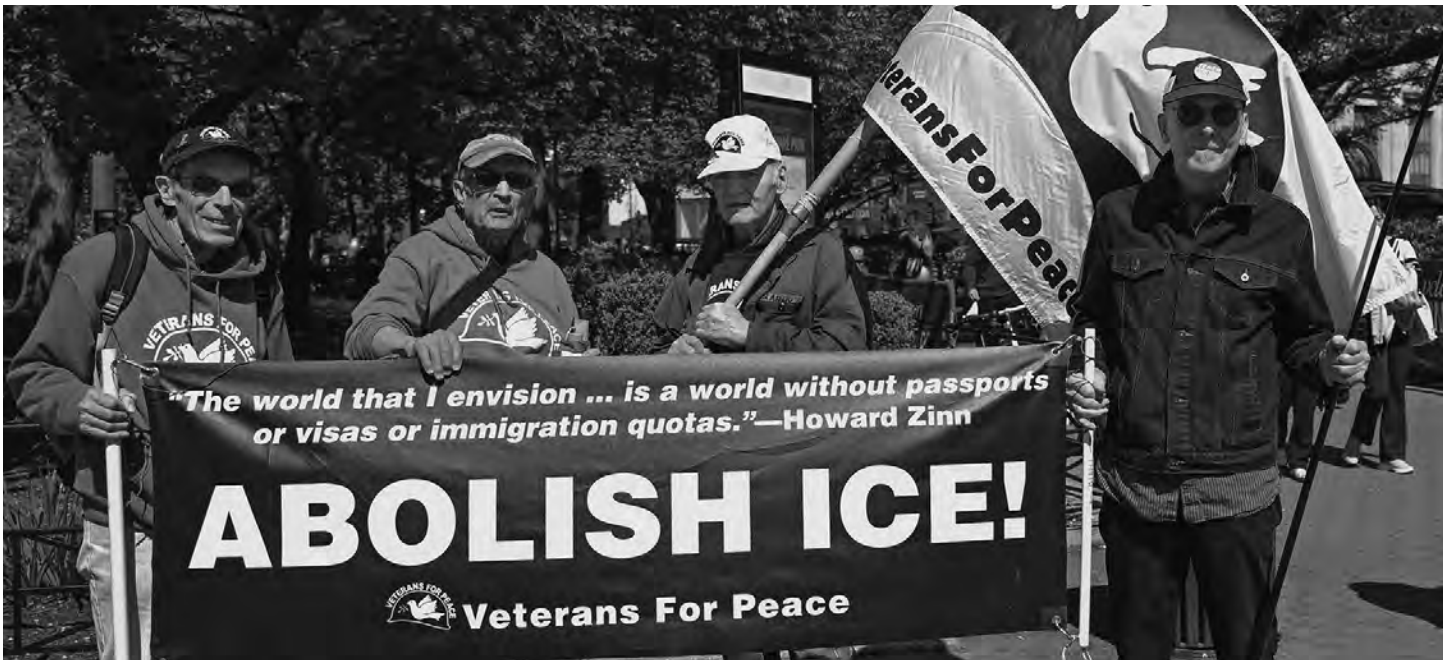
Recent Meeting Topics/Speakers: Jeremy Varon, author of the book, *Our Grief Is Not a Cry for War: The Movement to Stop the War on Terror;* Ben Freeman, co-author of *The Trillion Dollar War Machine,* with William Hartung, on "How U.S. Military Spending Fuels our Endless Wars"; Wayne Stiles, rescue Helicopter co-pilot who participated in evacuation of wounded and rescue operations on the USS *Liberty;* Lindsay Koshgarian, Program Director of the National Priorities Project, discussing the costs of war; and Dennis Fritz, author of *Deadly Betrayal: The Truth about Why the United States Invaded Iraq.*

Due to overwhelming demand, the NYC chapter newspaper, *Peace & Planet News,* has transitioned from quarterly to bi-monthly publication. Read, subscribe, and order copies at ***peaceandplanetnews.org.***

In-person Events: Numerous events concerning peace and justice issues, including the climate crisis, Iran, Gaza, Venezuela, Guantánamo, Korea, Okinawa, Yemen, war tax resistance, and nuclear weapons abolition.

In early July, the VFP *Climate Crisis & Militarism Project Wake Up Tour* will visit the New York area to protest the Jones Beach Air Show. Many of our chapter members plan to attend the annual National VFP Convention, August 6–9 in Kansas City, Missouri.

Bob Keilbach



New York City VFP Chapter 34 members at Union Square on May Day 2026. [Photo: Ellen Davidson]

#035 Spokane, Washington

Leveraging the Peace Veterans Voice since 1989.

We may stroll, saunter, meander, and occasionally "parade," but *"we ain't a'marchin' anymore!"* (Phil Ochs).

A few Spokane members joined the MLK Jr. Rally, March, and Resource Fair on January 19.

Eleven of us met with the City's Purchasing & Contracts Director urging implementation of Ordinance #C36299 banning nukes or any investments/purchases from nuclear weapons makers and suppliers.

We produced a video commemorating the self-immolation of Aaron Bushnell for National VFP.

John Alder, associate member of Chapter 35, crossed the rainbow bridge on February 22. *¡Presente!*

We joined a local NO WAR rally March 14.

We co-sponsored the March 21 Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane (PJALS) Annual Conference at $300 level. The conference theme was *From Survival to Vision: Crafting the Future We Deserve,* and Aaron Dixon was keynoter.

We tabled at the *No Kings* event on March 28, passed out *Peace & Planet News,* and got sign-ups.

We took part in a *No War* rally at Fairchild AFB front gate, protested the May 16 Armed Forces Torchlight Parade, as well as SKYFEST at Fairchild AFB on June 6-7. We will organize a commemoration of Hiroshima/Nagasaki war crimes in August. Other activities include looking into war tax resistance and building a new chapter website.

Our solidarity and connections with community action groups is our most valuable asset. Our motto: *Lead when you must; support when you can; support when you must; lead when you can.*

HH Higgins
Communications Coordinator

VFP Chapter 35 members went all out to make VFP visible at No Kings *Spokane*

#041 Cape Cod, Massachusetts The Jeffrey M. Lucey Chapter

VFP Chapter 41 has participated in all the anti-war and No Kings *protests on Cape Cod.*

This the 31st year of the Jeffrey M. Lucey Chapter's *Voices of Peace Poetry Contest.* The contest is open to all Cape and Islands writers, kindergarten through twelfth grade and adults.

Through this contest, Veterans For Peace links the art of poetry to problems of world peace, security, and human well-being. Particularly for our younger poets, poetry is one way of seeing things from a different perspective and provides them with the opportunity to honestly express their feelings toward building better relationships, for a better world.

This year we celebrate 85 winning poets and 14 cover artists. There were submissions from 540 poets and 75 cover artists, representing 28 schools with a total of 41 teachers facilitating student submissions. In the 31 years, more than 15,290 Cape and Islands students/poets have participated.

These are still difficult times for finding peace and forgiveness, both at home and abroad. We start here by expressing our thoughts through poetry, to find peaceful solutions to conflict and war. The Poetry Contest Awards Program was held on May 16, 2026.

Duke Ellis, Chapter Coordinator

#050 Northern Michigan

We will be choosing another recipient this year for a scholarship to Northwestern Michigan College. We award at least one scholarship yearly to a student who is supportive of the mission of Veterans For Peace.

We continue the process of erecting a "living peace monument" in Traverse City. We plan on "inducting" two to three people yearly who have worked tirelessly for peace and justice. A yearly ceremony will take place.

On Memorial Day, we remembered all the Michigan service members who lost their lives in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as all the civilian casualties of war. We remembered all veterans who have taken their lives. We remembered all veterans and civilians suffering the wounds of war.

Through our Memorial Day display, we educated our community as to the true costs of war regarding Iran, Palestine and other U.S. involvement. Panels with the names of casualties were displayed along with more than 260 markers symbolizing the deceased. "Taps" was played at noon, followed by the reading of all the names of Michigan casualties. Many community members participated in the reading of the names.

When it becomes available, we will screen the film *Earth's Greatest Enemy* at our state-of-the-art State Theatre.

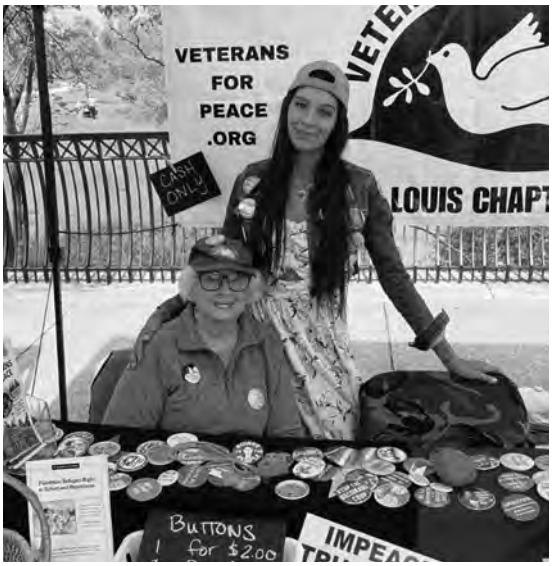
Tim Keenan, Chapter President

THEY DON'T COME HOME LOUD

They don't come home loud.
No marching bands follow them
into the quiet of their kitchens.
No one hears the war
in the way they close a door
just a little too carefully.
They sit at tables
with people who love them,
smiling at stories
they weren't there to remember.
Because part of them
is still somewhere else—
in dust,
in heat,
in a moment that never ended.
We say they're brave.
We say they're strong.
But we don't always see
how strength looks like silence,
how bravery sometimes means
getting through a normal day
without falling apart.
War doesn't always stay
where it was fought.
It follows…
in quiet rooms,
in sleepless nights,
in the space between
who they were
and who they had to become.
So if you thank them,
mean it.
Not just for what they did,
but for what they still carry.
Because the truth is,
some never come home at all,
and some do…
just not all the way.

—Lara Costa

Lara Costa, an 11th grade student at Cape Cod Regional Technical High School, Harwich, Massachusetts, won First Place in the 31st Annual Voices of Peace Poetry Contest sponsored by VFP Chapter 41, for the above poem, which demonstrates an incredibly perceptive understanding of many veterans' struggles. She read the poem at the Centerville, Massachusetts, Memorial Day Parade ceremony, one of the largest on Cape Cod.



Left: Ashley Salazar with Joan Powell (Woody Powell's widow) at St. Louis Earth Day 365, fundraising and educating the public on the environmental impacts of war. Right: St. Louis members with flags at the St. Patrick's Day parade.

#055 Santa Fe, New Mexico

Veterans For Peace has been playing whack-a-mole in New Mexico. In April, during the weeklong Shut Down Drone Warfare (SDDW) demonstration headed up by Toby Blomé, Nick Mottern, and Alamogordo local hero Scott Thompson, five participants were unlawfully arrested and detained for three days. This year's theme was "Refuse Illegal Orders." Next year will be the fifth SDDW action to abolish brutal, illegal drone warfare.

Currently there is an attempted hostile takeover of the locally owned New Mexico electric grid by Blackstone, the largest hedge fund private equity firm in the world, for anticipated data center buildouts. Data center *Project Jupiter* is sneaking through the system in closed-door hearings and NDAs with county commissioners attempting to usurp water where water is scarce. The latest scheme, facilitated by lame duck Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham, is to mix "produced water"—Permian Basin oil field waste containing PFAS among multitudes of other carcinogens—with the naturally occurring waters of New Mexico. The Water Quality Control Board, appointed by the governor, will decide our fate.

VFP Chapter 55 protests the Palestinian genocide weekly outside the capitol building, and we vigil against nuclear proliferation weekly at a prominent intersection in downtown Santa Fe, where we continue to get more and more honks.

VFP Chapters 63 and 55 worked collaboratively to pack the house for a May 14 Department of Energy presentation in Santa Fe. DOE came to explain their plan to increase nuclear weapons production exponentially, and we came with public comment and letters for the record. We need veterans from all over the planet to write in and oppose nuclear proliferation with our tax dollars on a budget of over $1 trillion. Visit pitpeis.com to learn more and take action by writing a letter of opposition to the DOE nuclear proliferation.

One of our newest members, Angus Paradise, just recruited two new members to VFP and brought his brother to our May Day rally.

Sharon Argenbright

#061 St. Louis, Missouri Don Connors Chapter

Veterans For Peace St. Louis has remained active and visible in the community through public education, solidarity actions, and sustained weekly demonstrations. This spring, chapter members participated in the St. Patrick's Day parade in St. Louis, marching together while carrying Irish, Palestinian, and Venezuelan flags as a symbol of international solidarity and shared struggles for peace and justice.

The chapter has also maintained a consistent presence in St. Peters, Missouri, where members and community allies have gathered every Saturday for ongoing demonstrations at Mid Rivers. These actions have continued for months, building community awareness and strengthening local connections around the call for peace and accountability.

In addition, the chapter participated in St. Louis Earth Day 365, hosting an educational booth to engage the public on the relationship between war and environmental harm. Conversations focused on how militarization contributes significantly to climate destruction and long-term ecological damage.

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Albuquerque VFP Chapter 63 was one of the main organizing partners of the Shut Down Drone Warfare week of action April 5–11 at Holloman Air Force Base at Alamogordo, New Mexico.

#061 – St. Louis, Missouri, continued

The chapter also recognizes new leadership, with Ashley Salazar stepping into the role of chapter president. She was nominated by the late Woody Powell and is pictured [on previous page] with his widow, Joan Powell, continuing a legacy of dedication to peace work.

Ashley Salazar

#063 Albuquerque, New Mexico Donald and Sally-Alice Thompson Chapter

The time to confront the war machine is now! In a way like never before! Shut Down Drone Warfare!

VFP Chapter 63, National VFP through a grant from the Howard Zinn Fund for Peace and Justice, and Joan Duffy Chapter 55 in Santa Fe, teamed with Shut Down Drone Warfare (SDDW) [***ShutDownDroneWarfare.org***], CodePink, and other like-minded organizations April 5–11 for a week of anti-drone action at Holloman Air Force Base in Alamogordo, New Mexico.

We engaged the community of Alamogordo and its Air Force drone pilots, crews, and service members, in a peace party, a peace march, good food, live music, film screenings of *National Bird* and *Earth's Greatest Enemy,* and leafletting at stores and the public library.

We conducted twice-daily vigils at the Holloman AFB entrance and exit, holding signs, flags, and banners [see above photo]. During the Wednesday morning vigil, three SDDW individuals were arrested, and two more were detained for blocking the entrance.

Now is the time to confront the war machine like never before!

Bill Tiwald, Chapter Secretary

#069 San Francisco

Responding to the never-ending threats and acts of war from the White House has sorely taxed *all* peace organizations! The San Francisco chapter has had contingents in every one of the numerous rallies and marches in the greater San Francisco Bay Area, with VFP board members often addressing large crowds. To encourage resistance within the military itself, the chapter mounted a billboard outside of Travis Air Force base, adding to nearly two dozen VFP billboards placed nationwide.

San Francisco Chapter's Lou Flores created this shrine for the Aaron Bushnell memorial. [Photo: Mike Wong]

We co-sponsored several well-attended events in the San Francisco Veterans' Building on Venezuela, Cuba, and the U.S.-Israeli attacks in the Middle East, with the local Party for Socialism and Liberation. Our St. Patrick's Day parade contingent on March 14 was led by two young veteran activists, and we passed out more than 400 leaflets to the thousands along the parade route.

Our chapter also had a table at the huge March 28 *No King*s demonstration in San Francisco, and chapter vice president Michael Wong spoke from the stage. In addition, three of our members amplified our message through a bullhorn to the entire marching crowd as they entered the rally site.

Chapter members joined over 150 others, mostly Filipino activists, in a rally at the Philippine Consulate in San Francisco on April 26, protesting the April 19 murder of 19 people, including two U.S. citizens, by the Philippine military on the island of Negros.

Nadya Williams

The unveiling of the peace pole by Rotarian Kathy Hicks, Interact President Keira McKnight, teacher and Rotarian John Grech, and Sonoma County's Veterans for Peace chapter president Fred Ptucha. [Photo: Lawson Gaylord/Sebastopol Times]

#071 Sonoma County

Chapter 71 is working for peace and social justice and having an impact. Recent activities include:

- *No King*s demo in Santa Rosa, March 28 (the crowd numbered 12,000 people).
- Guerilla theater at Tax Day demo in Santa Rosa, April 15 (200 people).
- "Save the VA" meeting in Santa Rosa, April 1 (200 people, mostly vets).
- Signed partnership marketing contract with Redwood Credit Union in Santa Rosa.
- Presentation of *Cost of War* program in Santa Rosa High School.
- Dedication of eight Peace Poles—"May Peace Prevail on Earth"—with Rotary Clubs.
- Presence at Sonoma County May Day demo and march.

Terence Munro McNeill

Jim Rine of Chapter 74 (left) with many other protesters at No Kings no. 3 in downtown Detroit. [Photo: Steve Friday/VFP 93]

#074 Metro Detroit Michael Gramlich–Steve Saelzler Chapter

VFP Chapter 74 members have been joining numerous protests around the Detroit area. In early January, we joined a group in downtown protesting the kidnapping of President Maduro of Venezuela. Members also joined 1000+ demonstrators at the *No King*s rally in the Detroit area on March 28. The rally included a march down Woodward Avenue, Detroit's "Main Street."

For Earth Week, Detroit VFP members reached out to the local community to show the links between U.S. militarism and the climate crisis by tabling at the Oakland County Earth Day festival, and we hosted a screening of Abby Martin's film, *Earth's Greatest Enemy* [***earthsgreatestenemy.com***] at the Swords Into Plowshares Peace Center and Gallery in downtown Detroit. Our members distributed *Peace & Planet News* special issue on Militarism and Climate Crisis at both Veterans' and Environment Caucuses at the Michigan Democratic Party Nominating Convention in Detroit.

Jim Rine

#075 Phoenix, Arizona
Mark Von Hagen-George Mizo Chapter

As of early April, Phoenix chapter members have participated in several *ICE Out* demonstrations and more recently the nationwide *No Kings* demonstration. Other activities and plans for the rest of the year are as follows.

As per our long-standing tradition, we visited the Changing Hands Bookstores in Phoenix and Tempe on Monday, May 4 (to the day), to commemorate the 56th anniversary of the deaths of the four Kent State University students—Jeffrey Miller, Allison Krause, Sandra Scheuer, and William Schroeder—killed by members of the Ohio National Guard when they opened fire on them and other defenseless students who were demonstrating against the Vietnam War that day. We distributed documents that summarize the events of that day and engage in conversations with those who are unaware of this tragic event. As always, our table display included the book *Kent State: An American Tragedy* by Brian Vandemark. Published in 2024, it is the gold standard by which everything written about Kent State prior to its publication should be judged.

Chapter members and supporters will return to Changing Hands Bookstores on August 4 to commemorate the victims of the U.S. bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and again on November 11 to distribute poppies and remind store patrons of, among other things, the significance of Armistice Day.

Richard Smith

#089 Nashville, Tennessee
Hector Black Chapter

The Hector Black Chapter has been busy on the streets and on the air. Members like Hani Nofal and Craig Bardo have been interviewed about domestic and international issues on more platforms than just Harvey and Jim's radio show. However, Harvey and Jim continue to try to get guests that add to the VFP conversation. Of late, the radio show has included guests focused on how members of the military can address concerns for their moral compass: Joy Metzler, Michael McPhearson, Titus Peachey of ExplorePOTC.org, Mike Prysner (thanks to Margaret Flowers sharing her interview), and Rev. David Gierlach, among others. Matt Hoh and Bill Astore also joined to update on so many issues.

We have also been on the street trying to expand the thinking of *No Kings* to include protesting militarism (bi-partisan) and peace. Jim Wohlgemuth, Tom Grose, Arnold White have been regulars at the weekly protest in front of the office of U.S. Senators Marsha Blackburn and Bill Hagerty. Jim and Hani Nofal and others have shown up to protest the racist, white supremacist power grab in Tennessee as the local fascists try to eliminate the last blue district in the state.

Chapter member Harvey Bennett continues to protest out front of the Elbit Factory in Charleston, South Carolina, and has recently assisted Jim Rine in his *No MAS* tour, hosting a showing of Abby Martin's movie, *Earth's Greatest Enemy.*

James Wohlgemuth

#090 Binghamton, New York
Stu Naismith Chapter

In January and February 2026, VFP Chapter 90 produced twenty-five 15-second videos for social media. Each video was an appeal to the military to fulfill their duty under the Uniform Code of Military Justice and refuse to follow illegal orders. The Stu Naismith Chapter shared the VFP billboard campaign and organized three billboards on roads leading into the base of the most frequently deployed U.S. Army unit, the 10th Mt. Division at Ft. Drum, New York.

We worked with a Columbus, Georgia, ad company to place a billboard outside of the "Home of the U.S. Infantry," Ft. Benning [formerly Fort Moore, 2023–25].

The play, *Reap What You Sow, Don't Lose Heart!* written by Jack Gilroy and zool Zulkowitz, produced by VFP members, and promoted by NYC Chapter 34, was performed at Manhattan University in January and in Binghamton in February. Shows have been booked in Syracuse and other locations as well. *Reap!* is a story of love and conflict between a U.S. Air Force MQ-9 Reaper drone pilot and her daughter. Influenced by Howard Zinn's writings, the play is offered to any VFP chapter for the asking. Go to ***risingtogether.theater*** to book the show in your locale, or to obtain the script for a local reading or production. *Reap!* is a great consciousness-raiser, and has the potential to raise money for your chapter.

In solidarity with World Beyond War, VFP Chapter 90 produced a video that quickly garnered over 5,000 views, showing off our Burma Shave–style sign action where we held twelve signs projecting our peace message spaced along a busy highway near Binghamton University. [See below.]

Jack Gilroy

CLOSE 800
US MILITARY BASES
WORLDWIDE
HEALTH CARE
HOUSING
ENVIRONMENT
EDUCATION
INFRASTRUCTURE
MENTAL HEALTH
NOT WARFARE

#091 San Diego, California
Hugh Thompson Memorial Chapter

Chapter 91 has been very active during our "long, cold winter." Our chapter is growing much younger, as is our board and our president, and the new energy is reinvigorating.

We started the year walking in San Diego's 2026 Martin Luther King Day Parade, which is always inspiring. Several of our younger vets have been getting together with young active-duty personnel to chat about many things, including what to do if given an illegal order. In that same vein, the chapter was pleased to be able to rent a huge *REFUSE ILLEGAL ORDERS* billboard for a month, located in the parking lot of the huge 32nd Street Navy Base and Exchange. The billboard spurred much discussion (radio, TV, print) here in this strong Navy town.

The San Diego chapter continues to hand out sleeping bags and water/food/socks downtown, as we approach 6,000 sleeping bags given out since December 2010.

Chapter members were present at many of the 17 *No Kings* rallies held all across San Diego County on March 28, including the huge rally of 40,000 downtown.

Stan Levin

In December, we lost one of our most cherished. Stan Levin, who lived to the age 96, was one of our most active and colorful members for many years. *¡Presente!* Stan. You will be missed!

Gilbert Field

#092 Seattle, Washington
The Daniel Ellsberg Chapter

Seattle VFP has a radio show that airs on KODX 96.9 FM every fourth Wednesday of the month 6–7p.m. Pacific Time. Past shows can be listened to via the KODX website: ***kodxseattle.org/seattlevfp/***

VFP 92 continues its SOVA rally at the Seattle VA. This year, Seattle Mayor-elect Katie Wilson showed up in support.

Seattle members tabled and marched with 70,000 protesters at the spring *No Kings* rally; we showed up to honor the memory of Alex Pretti and Renee Good, murdered by ICE.

Alex Pretti Memorial at the Seattle VA.

From the largest concentration of nuclear weapons in the U.S. located in Bangor, Washington; to Hanford, the most contaminated nuclear site in the Western Hemisphere; to the poisonous remains of uranium mining on the Spokane Tribe of Indians Reservation—these are issues that all Washington residents should know about, and that all elected officials have a duty to address. That is why Seattle VFP is an active member of the coalition Washington Against Nuclear Weapons (organized by Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility).

Michael Dedrick

#093 South Central Michigan

VFP Chapter 93, although small in size, continues to organize projects relevant to the local community. On Armistice Day, in November, we hold our annual *Concert For Peace* at The Ark in Ann Arbor, with proceeds going to the Peace Scholarship Fund, which provides financial assistance to Michigan College students enrolled in peace studies and conflict resolution programs (such

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South Central Michigan VFP* Concert For Peace, *Armistice Day 2025

Candlelight vigil held in Asheville, North Carolina, January, 2026 in the wake of the murders by federal agents of fellow citizens Keith Porter, Jr., Renee Good, and Alex Pretti.

#093 – South Central Michigan, continued
as Wayne State University in Detroit and Michigan State University in East Lansing). The event was first named the John Lennon Birthday Concert after Yoko Ono donated $10,000 in seed money to start the fund. Since its establishment in September 2026, the fund has granted a total of $43,000 in scholarship awards.

Another Chapter 93 tradition is our Martin Luther King series of talks, held at area libraries and college campuses, on how Dr. King called out the "triple evils" of poverty, racism, and militarism as forms of violence that exist in a vicious cycle, and described how they are interrelated, all-inclusive, and stand as barriers to living in "Beloved Community." In the talks, we point out that while the name, Martin Luther King, Jr., certainly evokes themes of poverty and racism for many people, militarism is rarely discussed during presentations about his legacy, or at MLK Day festivities. We encourage all chapters to organize Martin Luther King Day events, as they are a great place to educate the public about MLK's teachings on militarism.

No Draft! With the Trump Congress passing automatic sign-up draft registration, young males will be automatically registered for the military draft pool starting in December 2026. As part of a measure tucked into the annual defense policy bill Congress signed into law, males aged 18 to 26 must register for the Selective Service in case a draft is required. The last time a draft was in effect was February 1973, during the American war in Vietnam. With this news, our chapter members are making visits to college fairs and other venues to alert young people of their rights. Factual information is available at the GI Rights Hotline: ***girightshotline.org*** — 1-877-447-4487.

Bob Krzewinski

Scan the QR code to read "Before You Sign: A Letter to the Young" at NNOMY—National Network Opposing the Militarization of Youth.

#097 Kansas City, Missouri

Our efforts to bring new members to VFP have included boosting our social media presence, updating our website—***vfpkc.org***—and more in-person tabling and actions in cooperation with groups like Boots on the Ground Midwest, PeaceWorks KC, and the Party for Socialism and Liberation. These efforts have been quite fruitful. We traveled to Topeka, Kansas recently for the first meeting of a group of veterans in the process of forming a new VFP chapter. This new chapter will be in the capital of Kansas, and position veterans to more effectively fight back against the Fascist agenda currently being enacted in Kansas.

We spoke to the Young Democratic Socialists of America at Kansas State University about being anti-war and having moral injury; at a rally held to prevent the opening of a private immigration detention center in Leavenworth, Kansas; and at a press conference organized to bring attention to the DOE's attempt to produce more plutonium pits for new nuclear weapons.

In April we cosponsored the movie *Gaza Is Our Home* with the film's director, Monear Shaer. On May Day we held a press conference in front of the Kansas City VA calling for the restoration of funding and staff to the VA and the stopping of VA privatization, while proclaiming "NO" to more wars overseas. Before the press conference we delivered donuts to VA staff.

With the 2026 VFP National Convention coming to KC August 6–9, we have been very busy with the convention committee, helping plan local and national speakers, a public music event to raise money for Haskell University, an anti-nuclear action, and more. We also had the opportunity to meet in person with committee members when they came to KC in March to tour the venue and finalize arrangements. We are excited to welcome everyone to Kansas City in August. See you soon!

Jeffery Humfeld and Bryson Ripley

A steady stream of people at* No Kings *Milwaukee stopped by Chapter 102's table to express support, get information on issues, and find out how to get involved. Pictured (L to R): Members Paul Moriarity, John Zutz and Bob Liek. The enlistment poster made by John Zutz drew lots of attention, but no enlistees. [Photos: Bill Christofferson]

#099 – Asheville, Western North Carolina

We continue to hold our weekly peace vigil at Pack Square, the busy crossroads of downtown Asheville. Support from those who drive and walk by has grown more robust since January 2025.

In the incessant need to impactfully show up in fulfillment and promotion of VFP's Statement of Purpose in these times, we are challenged by a declining number of active members, few new and younger members, and the obstacles that our most experienced members face as we age.

In the words of Becky Luening, our VFP editor of chapter reports (and so much else), these reports "serve to inspire and to build solidarity between chapters." It is in this spirit that I write candidly about our chapter's situation and hope to foster conversation, encouragement, advice, and action for increasing VFP's numbers and dynamism in the streets and in all the other ways we can to bring change to the ways our government operates. Please contact me to discuss what we can make happen. I can be reached by email at we-need-you@veteransforpeace-wnc.org.

Gerry Werhan, Chapter President

#102 – Milwaukee, Wisconsin

So many assaults on peace, justice, human rights and democracy. So little time.

The third *No Kings* rally in Milwaukee on March 28 drew thousands of people from many backgrounds and organizations, promoting different agendas and causes, but united in their commitment to stopping authoritarianism.

A community fair featuring literature tables and booths from 50 organizations gave attendees—many of them new to protests—a wide variety of ways to get involved in the struggle. The idea to encourage cross-pollination was genius. Our Veterans For Peace booth drew a steady stream of visitors before and during the program, including some prospective new members.

Much of our attention these days is focused on rapid response to events ranging from the trial of a Milwaukee circuit judge charged with obstructing ICE agents trying to make an arrest in the courthouse, to ICE's kidnapping and detention of Salah Sarsour, president of the Islamic Society of Milwaukee and a pro-Palestinian activist, on trumped-up charges he poses a threat to U.S. foreign policy. He is a legal 32-year Milwaukee resident and businessman with no criminal record in the U.S.

Then there is the war with Iran. We can't even imagine what will be happening there by the time this is published. We continue to support coalitions organizing to protest and stop the illegal, criminal war.

Bill Christofferson, chapter reporter

#104 Evansville, Indiana

We joined thousands of concerned citizens in our area on March 28 at Evansville's Four Freedoms Monument to declare *"No Kings!"* One of our members delivered a rousing speech to the assembly (read it on our blog at ***vfpevansville.org***), and our table received much interest from attendees wanting to know more about us and how we expose the true costs of war. Over the last weekend in April and first weekend in May,

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#104 – Evansville, Indiana, continued
our chapter served as a community partner for a local theater's production of the musical *Hair.* We were stationed in the theater lobby before the show and delivered remarks during intermission about our work for peace. Our message was well received and about 40 people (from *No Kings* and *Hair* combined) have opted into our emailing list.

John Michael O'Leary, Associate Member/Webmaster

Ellen Barfield rode her bike at the Baltimore May Day gathering, with VFP and Palestine flags and the Radical Elders banner too!

#105 Baltimore, Maryland Phil Berrigan Memorial Chapter

Baltimore VFP has been represented at *No Kings,* May Day, and a rally opposing an ICE detention center in recent days, making the anti-military point that is sadly otherwise not enough featured.

Copies of *Peace & Planet News* were provided to a Maryland congressmember and a Baltimore City Councilmember at the official *No Kings* rally where Ellen Barfield decried the insane U.S. military adventures these days, to frequent applause, before we marched to the Baltimore ICE office and gave them heck!

Several hundred Marylanders rallied at the downtown Federal Courthouse before a hearing about a warehouse in western Maryland that ICE wants to make a 1500-bed immigration detention center. We were there with the VFP *Abolish ICE* banner featuring Howard Zinn's quote, *"The world that I envision . . . is a world without passports or visas or immigration quotas."* Soon after the hearing started, the judge ruled that ICE must follow the law requiring thorough impact analyses before they proceed.

A recent chapter meeting brought several new members in with some great ideas, and Ellen Barfield will help them connect with VFP working groups.

Ellen Barfield

#106 Dallas, Texas

Since last reporting, Chapter 106 hosted a *Vets Say No* banner drop at a freeway overpass, afterwards walking about 100 feet to display our big *ARREST BUSH* banner in front of Bush's nearby gated community.

We've cohosted and spoken at *MegaMarch for Palestine, Hands Off Venezuela, No War on Iran,* and anti-Repkon/Paligen protests, and we hosted David Rovics for a concert, community potluck, and fundraiser for Palestine Children's Relief Fund. We've attended all *No Kings* days, with VFP flags flying all around the metroplex. After several actions with our GAZA Freedom Flotilla "land-boat," we changed the word GAZA to CUBA, and sailed it back and forth across the freeway and around town.

We spoke about VFP at the Oak Cliff UU church's International Women's Day event and passed out our flyers and the *Peace & Planet News,* which the congregation loved so much, many plan to subscribe!

VFP 106 Associate Member Leslie Harris with Nobel Peace Prize recipient Dr. Ira Helfand, keynote speaker at EarthX 2026.

We helped organize the Dallas premier of *Earth's Greatest Enemy* and tabled at *EarthX*—where we chatted with keynote speaker Dr. Ira Helfand—and at the First UU of Dallas's annual Earth Day Fest, talking up VFP's Climate Crisis and Militarism Project and Abby Martin's *Earth's Greatest Enemy* movie, making sure everyone we talk with understands that the U.S. Military is the biggest institutional polluter and user of fossil fuels on the planet!

Leslie Harris

#112 Ventura County, California

There's no rest for the weary.

In fall 2025, members of VFP Chapter 112 tabled at the delightful Hart Park Powwow in Newhall, California, October 4–5; attended weekly protest/peace vigils in Ojai and Ventura; participated in the October 2025 *No Kings* protest, and shortly thereafter hosted the *Wake Up*

Chapter 112 table at the local high school district career expo.

to Climate Crisis & No MAS Tour in our area at UC Santa Barbara, which featured Abby Martin's film, *Earth's Greatest Enemy.* The film was independently reshown by students at the university several months later.

Chapter V.P. Shane Meserve initiated a chapter letter-to-the-editor campaign for Armistice Day in November, and got a letter published in our county's only mainstream newspaper, the *Ventura County Star.*

At the "Say Their Names" project towards the closing months of 2025, the Ojai Solidarity Network read for multiple weekends without repetition the names of the children massacred in Gaza. A few VFP members were present for some of the readings in the city park setting, affixing the VFP flag to the gazebo to show solidarity.

Responding to a PSL alert, VFP members attended an emergency protest at Ventura City Hall in response to the gross invasion of Venezuela.

In early January 2026, Chapter 112 began a series of weekend protests in Santa Barbara following the killings of Renee Good and Alex Pretti in Minneapolis. In mid-January, members set up a booth at the well-attended and popular *Justice for All Women's March*—the 10th annual. By invitation, veteran members M. Cervantes and A. Ringelstein presented a workshop to a boarding school high school classroom of students on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, using Dr. King's "Beyond Vietnam" speech as core material.

Ventura VFP members are often present at regularly scheduled freeway overpass protests.

A special International Women's Day public event at the site of the *No King*s demonstrations allowed veteran member M. Cervantes considerable time to speak on VFP talking points.

Chapter 112 members attended an annual high school district career expo with chapter secretary Helena Pasquarella assisting for the first time.

Finally, Ventura VFP members played out their community role in the third *No King*s demo. At that event, which drew 10,000 people, our chapter displayed its newly acquired Uncle Sam *Refuse Illegal Orders* sign.

Shane Meserve

#114 Sheboygan, Wisconsin Soxy Baughman Chapter

Greetings from the Soxy Baughman Chapter! 2025 proved to be a challenging year with the new administration overwhelming us with one outrage after another. Hard to keep track. In the past 15 months, our chapter continued protesting U.S support of the Israeli genocide as it ethnically cleanses Gaza and other places in Palestine. Our small group of demonstrators has often been engulfed by a larger group of anti-Trump

Ventura VFP Chapter 112 chapter members tabling at the Annual Oxnard Unified High School District's 2026 career expo.

protesters on most Saturdays. But we continue to focus on Zionist war crimes funded by U.S tax dollars. When confronted by accusations of anti-Semitism, we point out "we are not against all Jewish people per se, but atrocities committed against Arab-Palestinians by radical Zionists in the name of the Jewish people." It was gratifying to see a city park being used by over a thousand people at last summer's *No King*s day, and again this spring. Long live the First Amendment!

As the weather got colder we moved our activity indoors to the winter farmers market. No peace concert this year, but we sponsored labor activist and podcaster Ric Urrutia on April 23, speaking about the connection between large corporations, big banks, along with ICE and data center funding, with all the interconnectedness and its impact on the working class, our water supply, and the environment. A dozen of us marched in last year's Memorial Day parade and we aimed for a similar number for this year's event. That's it from Sheboygan; Keep the faith, brothers and sisters, and don't let the bastards grind you down.

Tom Contrestan

#117 Boise, Idaho The Anne Frank Chapter

Chapter 117 has been quite busy. We held our first ever backpack drive over the winter, filling over 50 backpacks with necessities for homeless veterans. We did this in conjunction with the Boise VA Homeless Project and with the help of several local social justice advocacy groups in the Boise area.

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#117 – Boise, Idaho, continued

In January we participated in a locally sponsored *ICE Out!* protest at Boise City Hall. Later in the month we tabled and assisted with safety for the annual Women's March. On January 30, we provided safety and security at the request of AFGE L1273 (Boise VA) for the Alex Pretti vigil. In February we participated in the *No War on Iran* protest at the Boise City Hall.

Several members of our chapter are training and acting in support of several local social justice organizations in the capacity of "safety observers" and as street medics with the Boise Street Medic program.

March was especially busy, with ongoing de-escalation training and medic training. On March 14, we manned a first aid table for Idaho Women's Day. March *No King*s saw us tabling, acting as safety observers, and augmenting the Boise Street Medics. We also participated in *Trans Day of Visibility* on March 31.

Our chapter continues to grow. When we first became a chapter last October, we started out with 10 members. Today we are at 20 members with several prospective members planning to attend our next meeting. We continue to partner with our local coalition of social justice organizations for the cause of peace and justice.

Raymond O'Dell, Chapter President

Ronnie Bullock and protestors from South Korea signal solidarity with the Cuban people during the 5K May Day march in Cuba.

#125 Atlanta, Georgia

Our Chapter Chair, Geoffrey Sumner, was honored to participate in the 12th Annual Peace Delegation to Vietnam, sponsored by our Chapter 160, the *Hoa Binh* (Peace) based in Hanoi, March 14–19. The delegation traveled through Hanoi, Dien Bien Phu, Hue, Da Nang, Con Dau, Ho Chi Minh City, and several smaller communities. Along the way, members visited and strengthened connections with organizations supported by the chapter, including Friendship Village, Hope Orchestra and Choir, Project RENEW, Dong Ha Blind Center, Chia Duc Son Pagoda Orphanage, Tu Du Hospital, and VAVA Hanoi. The journey offered opportunities for solidarity, cultural exchange, remembrance, and ongoing peace-building relationships.

Geoffrey Sumner connected with this Vietnamese veteran at the Viet Nam Friendship Village in Hanoi, a stop on VFP Chapter 160's Viet Nam Tour.

VFP Chapter 125 Vice Chair Ronnie Bullock participated in a solidarity delegation to Cuba, April 26–May 3, alongside approximately 70 members of the Cuban brigade. Delegates delivered medical and school supplies valued at roughly $750,000, transported through charter flights, convoys, and personal luggage contributions. The group visited schools, hospitals, and the Fidel Castro museum, while learning more about Cuba's free healthcare, education, and childcare systems. A highlight of the trip was participating in the May Day celebration, joining representatives from more than 50 countries in a 5K march to the U.S. Embassy. Ronnie also valued the opportunity to connect with like-minded people from around the world, including several members of About Face: Veterans Against the War.

Jamie Cooper, VFP Chapter 125 Secretary

#134 Tacoma, Washington

Our chapter meets monthly on the first Sunday at First United Methodist Church at 5601 S. Puget Sound Ave. in Tacoma, and newcomers are welcome. This year, we expanded our weekly Tuesday noon freeway bannering, adding new banners and a second weekday—Thursday—each week at 4pm to catch rush hour traffic for another hour. All are welcome to join us. We're carrying now the following assortment of messages, depending on the current news: *END MILITARY ECOCIDE; BLACK LIVES MATTER; END SYSTEMIC RACISM; NO WAR IRAN/VENEZUELA/CUBA;* and *REFUSE ILLEGAL ORDERS.*

We now have clickers and have counted as many as 260 honks of approval in one hour, a noticeable recent increase of public support.

In other news, we continue information tabling as in past years, at local festivals including *Hilltop Street Fair, Arts on the Ave, Lakefair Summerfest, Steilacoom Apple Squeeze Festival,* and *Veterans Resource Fair.* Being so close to the heart of the belly of the beast, namely Joint Base Lewis-McChord, we engage in many meaningful conversations with both active duty military and military veterans here in Pierce County. We're extremely happy this year to welcome the addition of a very active new member, Marty Kunz.

Kristi Nebel, Chapter Secretary

Setting up one of the signs for VFP Chapter 134's weekly freeway bannering in Tacoma.
[Photo: Steve Nebel]

#160 Vietnam | Hoa Binh Chapter

The Hoa Binh Chapter completed another powerful 16-day journey through Vietnam, March 14–29, 2026, with over 20 guests. Rooted in the belief that enduring reconciliation is built through presence, witness, and generous action, the delegation engaged deeply with Vietnam's wartime history and its living legacies.

Guided by Hanoi-based Chapter 160, participants walked the battlefields of Dien Bien Phu, descended into the Vinh Moc tunnels, and honored lives lost at the Con Son Prison system and Trường Sơn Cemetery. Crucially, the tour advanced healing through direct support: the group accompanied a Project RENEW UXO clearance team in Quang Tri, visited the Agent Orange–affected community at Friendship Village, and bore witness at Tu Du Hospital. The trip's financial contributions directly furthered war-legacy remediation, including unexploded ordnance clearance and care for Agent Orange survivors. By listening to veterans on all sides, sharing meals with local partners, and standing on ground still being cleaned decades later, the delegation embodied VFP 160's conviction that generous, firsthand engagement transforms both visitor and host, securing the tour's vital role for future generations.

Tom Wilber

#161 Iowa City | Eastern Iowa

VFP chapter 161 currently has 34 members, most of whom live in the Iowa City, Iowa area. We meet six times a year, both in person and on Zoom. Meetings are always lively and sometimes passionate.

In April, we co-sponsored with Peace Iowa a day-long serial reading of two Martin Luther King speeches, something we've done on April 4 for almost a dozen years. We recited his controversial "A Time to Break Silence" speech of April 4, 1967. About 90 people participated, including VFP members, notable Iowa City people who read sections of the speeches and many others who came to listen. Organizer Ed Flaherty thought Dr. King's question, *"Is our nation planning to build on political myth again and then shore it up with the power of new violence?"* was especially timely this year.

Another long-standing tradition of VFP Chapter 161 is Reclaiming Armistice Day every November 11. Ours is a solemn community celebration that includes resident bugler Ross Porch playing "Assembly," and ringing a bell 11 times to commemorate the signing of the armistice on 11/11/1918, ending "the war to end all wars." Our speaker was Dr. James Zogby, cofounder of the Arab-American Institute. His topic: "The War That Didn't End All War and Instead Launched a Century of Conflict."

Art Roche, Chapter Secretary

#164 North Coast Oregon

We are Chapter 164. We are not large, but we are working hard to improve the position of veterans.

We meet on the second Thursday of each month. Of course we are really concerned about the issues concerning the VA. We protest every Saturday at Nehalem and Tillamook, Oregon. We display our VFP flags and signs. We are proud to be Veterans For Peace.

Brian McMahon, Chapter Founder

continued on page 32…

VFP Chapter 180 members and comrades brought a counter demonstration to the Veteran's Day parade in Fresno, California.

#180 Fresno, California

Central California's VFP Chapter 180 in Fresno has been active with community engagement, including protest actions on Labor Day, the *No Kings* protests, Armistice Day, and various demonstrations to support community resistance to ICE and militarized feds. Our chapter is small but passionate, and we work hand in hand with our fellow Fresno Peace Coalition Members (Raza Against War, Peace Fresno, WILPF, and the Fresno Center for Nonviolence) to call out entities at all levels for their complicity in funding wars and fueling the climate crisis.

Our chapter president, Josh Shurley, joined an international peace delegation to Venezuela with CodePink members and other international activists to witness the impact of U.S. sanctions and the January 3 military strikes, while supporting Venezuelan sovereignty.

Josh also gave a talk to the Fresno State Sustainability Club about climate crisis and militarism, and the chapter hosted the CCMP's No MAS Tour to present a screening of Abby Martin's film, *Earth's Greatest Enemy.* The chapter continued its community outreach by bringing a screening of the film *No Other Land* to Fresno City College. The event was well-attended and led to an impactful Q&A session amongst students and activists in our community.

Monica McFarland

#184 Mississippi

"The Golden Boot" awarded to Trump at No Kings 3, March 28, 2026. [R. Nacanaynay]

Chapter 184 assisted in organizing *No Kings* no. 3 in Gulfport, Mississippi, where in a mock awards ceremony Trump was to be "given" (not awarded) the Humility Award if he ends all the wars. In addition, he won the Golden Boot, as did local Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith, via viva voce.

Mississippi VFP has been providing security for vulnerable populations upon request, including the Hispanic community at a Catholic church for more than a year.

On the heels of the attack on Iran, VFP Chapter 184 endorsed the Answer Coalition's emergency protest. Alongside Mississippi's Party of Socialism and Liberation (PSL), our members helped pull security and spoke at the event held in front of congressman Mike Ezell's office in Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

A representative of our VFP chapter also spoke at an earlier protest in Gulfport, on "Hands Off Venezuela."

Students from the local college were introduced to VFP when we tabled at an anti-ICE protest held after the murder of Alex Pretti.

S. Williams and R. Nacanaynay

#187 Homer, Alaska Brother Asaiah Chapter

It is my honor to announce the founding of the Brother Asaiah Chapter 187 of Veterans For Peace in Homer, Alaska, on April 18, 2026. We marked the occasion by tabling at Homer's Democracy Fair and we continue our outreach alongside other local veteran and social justice groups. Named for a beloved veteran and community member, our chapter carries forward Brother Asaiah's enduring message of peace, compassion, and love in the "Cosmic Hamlet by the Sea." Visit us at ***HomerVFP.com*** and contact us at HomerVFP@gmail.com.

Aneesa Ahad, Acting Chapter Secretary

#702 Las Vegas, Nevada

Since the Las Vegas chapter was formed in late October, we've had a very productive six months establishing meaningful relationships and participating in a variety of events including numerous anti-war and anti-occupation protests, picket lines, and community meetings, as well as an *Alliance for Nuclear Accountability* conference and the *Uranium Film Festival.* We've connected with environmental, labor, and mutual aid groups and are growing neighborhood defense networks.

We participated in Armistice Day and MLK Day parades, a VA staff appreciation day, and hosted a vigil honoring Aaron Bushnell. We have held social events for recruitment of other veterans as well as active-duty and National Guard members. We formed a book club and so far have read *War is a Racket* and *Assata,* and watched the film *Sir! No Sir!*

Lastly, we trained 35 people in *Stop the Bleed* hemorrhage control with excellent feedback, and are planning another session next month with the help of a Howard Zinn grant which allowed us to purchase mannequins. Other future projects include supporting Nevada Desert Experience Sacred Peace Walk, screening of the film *Earth's Greatest Enemy,* going to schools to talk to students and parents about the ugly realities of military service, and hosting a deported veterans town hall.

Olga Garcia, Chapter Co-founder

Members of Las Vegas VFP Chapter 702 showed their appreciation for VA staff outside one of the city's VA facilities.

#904 Richmond, Virginia

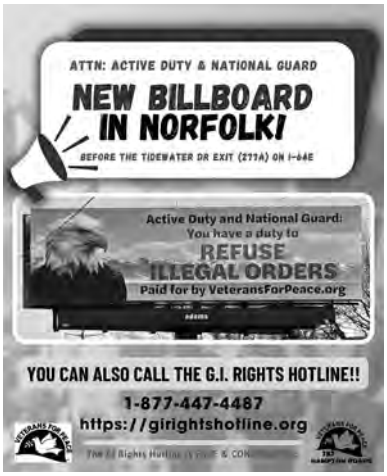
This is a new chapter established this year with the help of the 757 Chapter in Norfolk, Virginia. We are supporting local movements that include Virginia Retirement System Divestment from Genocide, Students for Justice in Palestine, De-Flock, and Immigrant Justice groups like PSL and the Virginia Defenders. Our membership is growing and we are establishing relationships with the above-referenced organizations as well as DSA, Food Not Bombs/Mutual Aid Richmond, and attempting to amplify their causes.

Nothing else new or unusual to report at this time. :)

RJ, Chapter Secretary

#757 Norfolk, Virginia | Tom Palumbo and James Bailey Memorial Chapter

With the launch of the VFP National Billboard campaign, two were installed in the busy Hampton Roads' 7 Cities region in February/March. One was in Hampton, Virginia, near Joint Base Langley/Ft. Eustis, in the vicinity of the VA Hospital, west of the busy Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel (HRBT). The second was in Norfolk, off I-64 West, near Tidewater Drive, along a busy route utilized daily by active-duty personnel during shift change as they were leaving NAVSTA (home of the world's largest U.S. Naval base.) Thousands of eyes saw these messages!



Poster design by Heather Butler of Norfolk, Virginia, VFP #757.

Significantly, the local newspaper, the *Virginian-Pilot,* featured some of the most thorough, timely anti-war coverage in years—both online and in print on March 29, 2026—as a Sunday cover feature.

Chapter 757 members have been partnering with various community organizations to build mutual events, including local protests. Some of them include, the Norfolk Catholic Worker, Hampton Roads for Palestine (HR4P), Common Defense, and About Face. The local historic arts theater, Naro Expanded Cinema, has also been supportive of these causes over many years in Norfolk. Recent films screened there include *Earth's Greatest Enemy, No Other Land, The Voice of Hind Rajab,* and *Palestine 36.* These events provide VFP 757 with tabling opportunities to educate the public on our presence in Hampton Roads and to invite veterans and their supporters who attend the events to join our Chapter.

Ann Williams

1003 Ryukyu, Okinawa

On May 2, 2026, we passed out conscientious objector fliers to U.S. military personnel outside the Kadena Airforce Base, Gate 2 street. We recruited a new veteran member who is in process of separating from the military and moving back to the U.S. with his Palestinian wife. We encouraged him to join one of the local VFP chapters in Texas near where they are moving.

Yusei Ota

Though Washington, D.C., VFP Chapter 16 is inactive at present, VFP member Mike Marceau regularly shows up to local actions. He joined protesters in the D.C. streets January 8, the day after Renee Good was murdered by ICE thugs in Minneapolis. Mike also spent took part in a remembrance at the White House on April 3, for the 110 girls killed by a U.S. missile attack on their school on the first day of the war on Iran.

VFP Britain Chapter Revival

VETERANS FOR PEACE UK was formed in 2011 and closed in 2022 due to circumstances many members found difficult to understand. Veterans For Peace Britain has since been formed by some of the ex-members of VFP UK who were not content to let it die.

VFP Britain uses a Signal group for keeping in contact with each other, and a Facebook group functions as our membership hub [facebook.com/groups/769461274297046]. Find them on the web at ***veteransforpeacebritain.com.***

Mission: "Veterans For Peace Britain unites ex-service members and supporters dedicated to promoting peace and opposing war as a solution in the 21st century. Join us in advocating for a more peaceful world through understanding and solidarity. Together, we can make a difference."

VFP Chapter 23 in Rochester, New York, was honored by their Monroe County Legislature. Pictured, left to right: Marybeth Knowles (Ch. 23 Treasurer), Steven Heveron-Smith, Yuewrsha Roman (Monroe County Legislature President), William Benet, Sue Hughes-Smith (Legislator. District 14), Marvin Stepherson (Legislator, District 3), Windsor Wade, Marilyn Lambert-Fisher, Rev. James Swarts (Ch. 23 President), William Fisher, Chris Norton, Jack Spula (Ch. 23 Exec.Comm.), and Holly Adams. [Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Henderson]

Fred McNeil

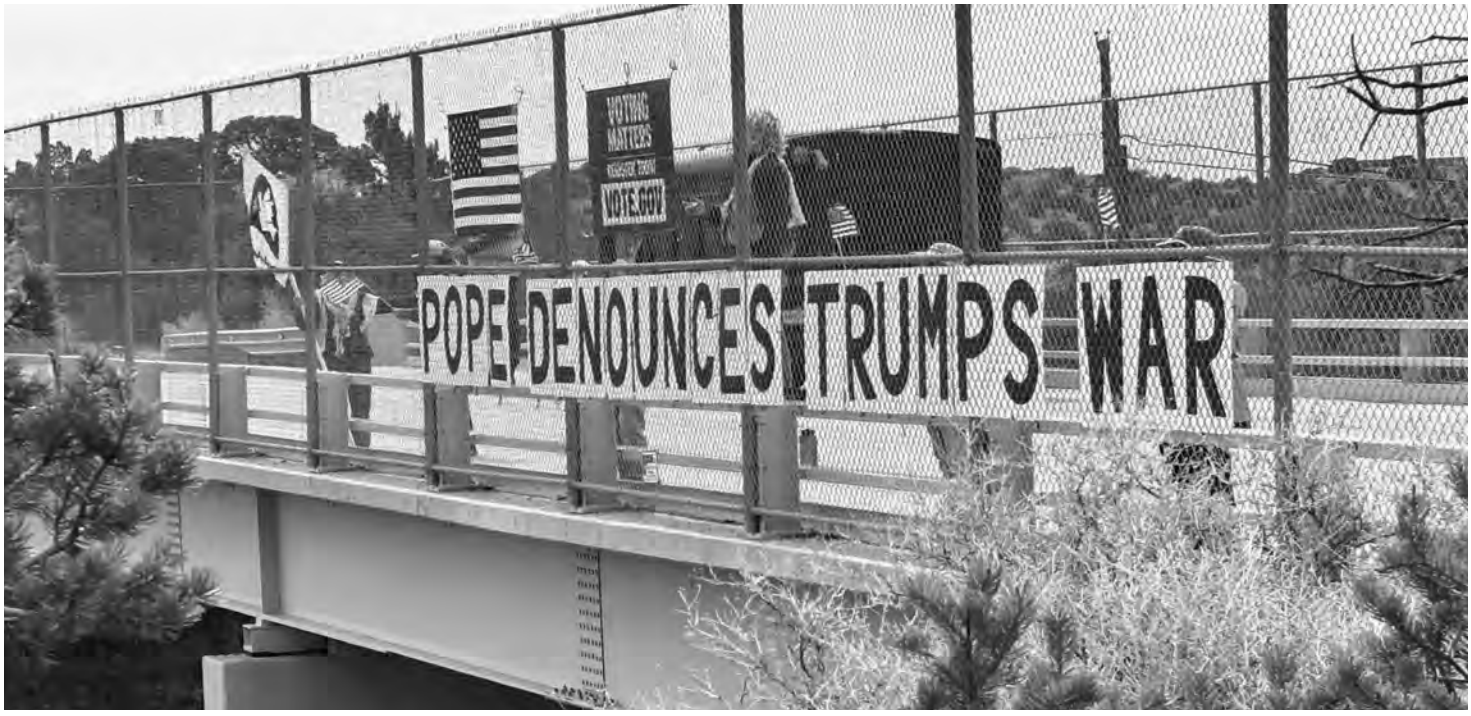
WAR TOYS

They wind you up at eighteen
Tell you this is the alpha male dream.
Old men playing politics with our young
Caring only for their political chess game.
Many survive and many die,
Funny how the old men never give it a try.
They run, they charge, and they are heroic
Mothers and widows remain so stoic.
Truth be known they are just cannon fodder,
Chess pieces to be moved in a game of war.
Survivors when they are old and gray
only wish and pray
That the departed had just one more day.

FRED McNEIL is a veteran of the U.S. Army (1966–69, Korea, Pleiku, Vietnam) and a member of Veterans For Peace. A retired educator based in Centreville, Maryland (40 miles east of D.C.), he has been married for 50 years, and has 3 kids and 4 grands.

VFP member Frank Dorrel, distributor of the ÁDDICTED To WAR *comic, went to see* Steal this Story, Please! *when it screened in Los Angeles April 17. He came away with this nice photo of himself with Amy Goodman and her faithful companion, Zazu Goodpup! "Big Frank" urges all his anti-war friends to see the film if they can. He also let us know that* ÁDDICTED To WAR *author Joel Andreas is in the process of updating the comic book, and that the 2026 edition, expected to be out by October or November, will include the Trump era—Israel's genocide in Gaza, the war on Iran, Venezuela, and more. Check addictedtowar.org for information.*

Stephen Bare of VFP Chapter 11 reported: "We brought the VFP banner and other signs to the March 28 No Kings demo at San Lorenzo Park in Santa Cruz. We handed out fliers and were well-received and well-respected by thousands of participants."



In Santa Fe, New Mexico, VFP chapter 55 supported the Pope with a banner on the bridge, April 17, 2026. [Photo: Sharon Argenbright]

Antiwar Veterans + Local Progressive Bookstores = A Force Multiplier for Peace!

by Sam Coleman

Consider a community event at which veterans publicly witness against war by discussing antiwar books dealing with America's disastrous wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere. Members of Orange County VFP Chapter 110 and area Military Families Speak Out (MFSO) organized such an event in November 2025. A first for us, the event arose out of our desire to do something significant on Armistice Day (Veterans Day). We decided to organize a book discussion on the evening of November 11 featuring post-9/11 veterans as panelists, in collaboration with a local bookstore.

We are grateful to Chris Giaco, owner of Page Against the Machine (PATM), an independent progressive bookstore in Long Beach, California, for not only agreeing to host the discussion, but playing an indispensable role in the project. Though limited in space, PATM is well known in the community as the local go-to scene for forums on progressive issues. Venturing through the shop's front door invariably puts one in the company of interesting people.

Our event focus was books about post-9/11 veterans and featured a panel of three former servicemembers. Coast Guard veteran Joy Griffith chose for her discussion Ann Jones' ***They Were Soldiers: How the Wounded Return from America's Wars,*** and Marine veteran Fernando Islas chose Daniel A. Sjursen's ***Ghost Riders of Baghdad: Soldiers, Civilians, and the Myth of the Surge,*** both titles recommended by event organizers. Our third panelist, Navy veteran Louis Raprager, chose to discuss a personal favorite, Travis Martin's ***War and Homecoming: Veteran Identity and the Post-9/11 Generation.***

Benefits of Collaboration

We had several diverse but overlapping objectives in organizing this event:

- to drive home the staggering costs of America's ill-conceived wars of choice, as witnessed by the young men and women charged with fighting them;
- to hear post-9/11 war veterans speak about their experiences with the kind of critical voice that the mass media tends to silence; and
- to overcome some of the social and cultural barriers that needlessly separate veterans from America's civilian public by allowing vets to present themselves as authentic, multidimensional people with hopes, fears, loves, and frustrations like everyone else.

L to R: Post-9-11 Veterans Fernando Islas, Joy Griffith, and Louis Raprager at the Armistice Day event in Long Beach, CA.

The event was a success in those respects and others. The store's modest space was packed to standing room only with an audience of around 35 attendees, whose perceptive Q&A went well past the 90 minutes allotted to presentation and discussion. Many who were there described it as "powerful." Since our featured speakers were active with several left-progressive organizations including About Face (which has recruited more veterans Millennial Generation veterans than either VFP and MFSO), we welcomed networking between veterans and allies at the event.

A longer-range goal of collaborating with local bookstores is to create an "antiwar bookshelf beachhead" by increasing the number of antiwar books on store shelves—selections that serve the shared interests of booksellers and our movement—the potential of influencing municipal and school librarians, college and high school teachers and students, clergy, workers, and intellectuals. Many excellent antiwar books are missed by lists that some progressive publishers rely on for sales. Personal networks and word-of-mouth endorsements can work wonders to correct that blind spot.

Book Criteria

> ***To prevent another cycle of military debacles, veterans must take the lead in voicing criticism. Those who bore the brunt of the costs of [the Afghanistan] war are the most familiar with its inefficiencies and shortcomings. They understand the vast chasm between the public pronouncements of our leadership and the reality on the ground. They are also the only ones with the standing to challenge an institution that has become the new third rail of American politics–an institution applauded at sporting events but never questioned about what it does overseas.***
>
> —Jason Dempsey, former infantry officer, in Andrew Bacevich and Daniel A. Sjursen (eds.), *Paths to Dissent* (2022)

Ideally, book choices should reflect VFP's mission to expose the costs of war. Despite the compelling appeal of fictional works, I believe nonfiction has a more genuine moral stature. And some books may factually relate veterans' suffering in vivid detail but couch it in such a way that accommodates or even glorifies war. After providing recommendations as well as criteria for selecting books, veterans should then be trusted to explore and express their own truths in discussing a chosen book, with audience members given the chance to deepen their understanding of war in the Q&A.

Details, Details

Every aspect of turning a veteran-focused bookstore event into a reality poses complications and difficulties. For that reason, first-time organizers may opt to "keep it simple." Book events can run the gamut from a straightforward discussion of one book, led by the author or an enthusiastic reader, to an ambitious, multi-participant event like the one we pulled off.

Sam Coleman, PhD, MSW, *is a Lifetime Associate Member of VFP Chapter 110 in Orange County, California, and former facilitator for the VFP Military Trauma Working Group. Anyone who has organized book events in the past, or wishes to in the future, is invited to contact him at samkcoleman@gmail.com to share successes, pratfalls, and best practices!*

VETERANS FOR PEACE

41st National Convention and Annual Meeting

AUGUST 6–9, 2026

Kansas City, Missouri *& Online*

JOIN US AUGUST 6–9, in person at the University of Missouri in Kansas City, or virtually on Zoom, for an exciting, informative, and rejuvenating gathering as together we organize, reflect, and build the future of our veterans' peace movement at a time when repression continues to rise and war profiteers continue to do harm to people and the planet. Engage with veterans and allies working on veterans' health care, active-duty outreach, migrant and student defense, climate and militarism. Be inspired by amazing poets, organizers, educators and activists—those pictured below and more!

In-person attendees may opt to stick around after the convention for a Sunday evening public music concert—a fundraiser for Haskell Indian Nations University.

Melissa & Zahid Chaudhry

Mitch Walking Elk

Chris Smalls

Paul Ortiz

Margaret Stevens

Jared Ball

Ann Suellentrop

Lennox Yearwood Jr.

Anthony Aguilar

Daniel Wildcat

Joy Metzler

Jodie Evans

Justin Loza

Teresa Mei Chuc

Strong Buffalo

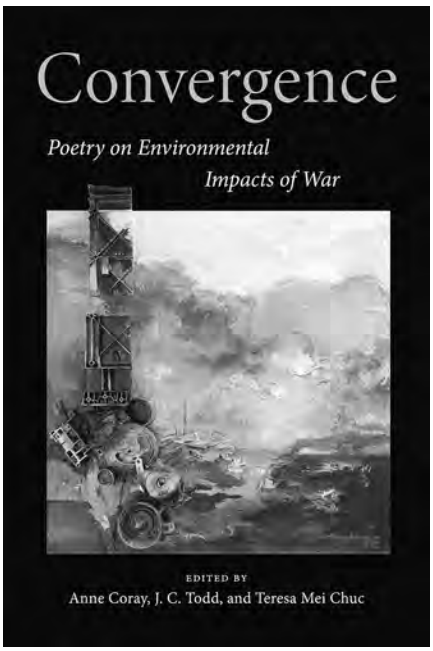
Gwendolen Cate

Brian McGinnis

Find all the details about 2026 convention speakers, program, accommodations, plus advertising and registration links, at: ***vfpconvention.org***

Convergence: *Poetry on Environmental Impacts of War*

Convergence is a groundbreaking collection offering a vital perspective on war's destruction of the natural world—the creatures, plants, soil, water, and atmosphere of Earth. Edited by Anne Coray, J. C. Todd, and Teresa Mei Chuc. Published by Scarlet Tanager Books (2026).



Review by Doug Rawlings

I suppose it's true that when most of us open a book, we bring with us certain expectations based on the genre. My encounter with historical fiction, for example, brings with it a host of expectations, many of which are based on life experiences. This is certainly true when I open up a collection of poems.

Fortunately for me and for many readers of poetry, expectations can be rattled and transformed by the artistry and wisdom of poets and their editors. ***Convergence*: *Poetry on Environmental Impacts of War*** (Scarlet Tanager Books, 2026) is such a collection.

For years, I have maintained that a poem that "works" has to be able to stand by itself with no prologue or epilogue necessary. Then I opened up ***Convergence.*** As I began reading the poems, I became increasingly intrigued by the poets' note attached to each one. The poems do indeed "stand by themselves," but the reflections that accompany them add significantly to the reader's understanding of the nature of war and its impact on the natural world. And so this collection justifiably stands as a valuable resource as well as a testament to the beauty of poetry.

Take, for example, Teresa Mei Chuc's poem, "Agent Blue." The powerful beauty of her language resonates throughout the poem:

> *To kill correctly*
> *takes calculation.*
>
> *Down to a science.*
> *…*
> *Because*
> *mortars,*
> *grenades*
> *and bombs*
> *can not destroy*
> *a grain.*
> *…*
> *Know what it*
> *takes to kill*
> *the seeds.*
> *…*
> *To be surrounded*
> *by love but unable*
> *to absorb it.*

In a very few words she captures the personal depth of war and its universal impact on the innocent, its ability to crush one's world forever. And then, her accompanying statement deepens our understanding:

> *"…Due to the U.S. military's spraying of chemicals such as Agent Blue during the war, high concentrations of arsenic have remained in the Mekong Delta environment for the last sixty years, continuing to contaminate the waters, sediments, and soils."*

As a former high school and university teacher, it's because of contributions like Teresa's that I would be equally comfortable recommending this book for use in a literature classroom, science classroom, or a history classroom. Imagine combining her work with John Balaban's, Bill Ehrhart's, and Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai's, to name a few, and you get my point—this is a collection of poems well worth keeping in school libraries as well as at home. As students become increasingly aware and concerned about the deteriorating nature of the environment, works like ***Convergence*** can give them a deeper understanding of how we are all complicit in the earth-shattering crisis—and provide them with yet another resource to back up their chants of "No More Wars." The power of poetry lives on! Thank you to ***Convergence*** editors for putting this collection in our hands.

Personal note: *I really started taking poetry seriously after I returned from the American war in Vietnam. Here was a medium that could accurately capture the surreal nature of that war. No need for the traditional "beginning, middle, and end" formatting for the narrative. Nope. You could jump right into the moment a mortar hit, feel its impact, look around, and jump back out again. Then on to the next poem.* —Doug

---

Teresa Mei Chuc is to be a featured poet-presenter at this year's convention in Kansas City. Vietnam veteran poet **Strong Buffalo,** an enrolled member of the Sisseton Wahpeton Dakota, is also an honored guest. **Doug Rawlings** has promised to grace us with a few words via Zoom. ***VFP POETS: Sign up for the Thursday night event ahead of time by emailing editor@veteransforpeace.org.***

W. D. Ehrhart

HOLES

Out in the boonies of Vietnam
while on patrol, night after night
you'd dig a new fighting hole,
every night in a different place,
every night another hole
like a grave, but not as deep.

On a company sweep, you're
talking two hundred fifty holes
a night. Battalion operation
a thousand holes each night.
Night after night after night.

And if you had to take a crap,
and everyone did, you dug
a little hole and shit in it.
We called them cat holes.

You also needed to dig a hole
for your garbage, mostly C-ration
cans, as if, if you buried your trash,
the Viet Cong and the NVA
wouldn't know you'd been there.

The Americans dug these holes
for seven years, more or less.
Hundreds of thousands of holes.
Night after night after night
from the DMZ to the Mekong.

That's a lot of holes,
a lot of garbage,
one hell of a lot of crap.

> **Author's Note:** *Without a doubt, the American War in Vietnam caused massive and permanent damage to the flora and fauna of Vietnam: dioxin poisoning, bomb and artillery craters, the destruction of wildlife on a massive scale. In the grand scheme of things, digging up the surface of the land as I describe it here in "Holes" may have had only a minor—and reversible—impact. But everywhere we Americans went, we changed the landscape, and not for the better.*

W. D. EHRHART is a Marine Corps veteran of both the American War in Vietnam and the Vietnam Veterans Against the War movement. He is the author of Thank You for Your Service: Collected Poems (McFarland & Co., Inc.).

James Janko

LATE-NIGHT SCRIBBLE IN MARGINS OF UNPAID BILL

one day in Củ Chi
knee-deep in paddy mush
booby trap
white flash
shards of leg
medic tying tourniquet
and hours later
REVENGE
bombs and napalm
fields and huts ablaze
no rice grass anymore
no coconut palms
no jackfruit or tamarind
no dragon fruit trees—
this is the moon
GIs on patrol days later
leave Coca-Cola
in dying village
show goodwill
win hearts and minds of ghosts
recipe for war same-same
during my time here
light the earth
shake and bake
there is a saying in SE Asia—
ants suffer when
elephants rage

> **Author's Note:** *I was drafted into the Viet Nam War. In 1970, while serving as a combat medic in an infantry battalion commanded by Colonel George Armstrong Custer III, I refused to carry a weapon. My unit operated in areas where resistance forces often disappeared into tunnels, and if we couldn't find our so-called "enemy," our commanders called in the Air Force to destroy all that might be concealing or sustaining them. Planes bombed rice paddies, forests, fields, rivers, and villages, and they defoliated huge tracts of land with Agent Orange. I soon realized we were fighting the earth—the entire Vietnamese landscape. If we couldn't find our "enemy," we could, and we did, destroy their land. "Late-Night Scribble in Margins of Unpaid Bill" describes a basic military strategy: defeat the opposition by defeating the earth.*

JAMES JANKO's novels and short stories have won numerous awards. His fourth novel, *The Wire-Walker,* was published in the fall of 2025 by Regal House, a women-owned press. Four Windows Press published Janko's debut book of poetry, *Love and Catastrophe,* in 2023.

Lynn White

A ROSE FOR GAZA

Gaza is a garden full of roses.
Stone roses.
Rock roses.
No petals to crush and bruise
to release their fragrance.
Only dust.
Dust and the stench
of death.
No green space left.
No sweet tranquility,
peace or quiet.
No escape.
No garden of Eden here.
No gateway to paradise.
Rubble and rock roses.

> **Author's Note:** *The Israeli bombing and ground invasion of Gaza has affected all aspects of the environment, and not only the built environment. Bombs being used include not just modern missiles but old, inaccurate ones supplied by the U.S., which turn wild spaces, gardens, and agricultural areas to dust and rubble, leaving no food or sanctuary for any living creature.*

LYNN WHITE lives in northern Wales. Her work is influenced by issues of social justice and events, places, and people she has known or imagined. She is especially interested in exploring the boundaries of dream, fantasy, and reality.

TWO POETS featured on this page are VFP members—W. D. Ehrhart and James Janko. These three poems are just a small sample of the 90 works included in the ***Convergence*** collection. Reprinted with permission.

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PEACE THROUGH NONVIOLENT ACTION
FROM CHAOS TO COMMUNITY

We hope to see YOU at the 41st Annual VFP Convention
AUGUST 6–9, 2026
Kansas City, Missouri & *Online*

— more information on page 37 —

PHOTO BY REI LOPEZ

Members of Veterans For Peace were among the 150 veterans and military family members who occupied the rotunda of the Cannon House Office Building on April 20, 2026, in a solemn, disciplined protest against the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran. About Face–Veterans Against the War initiated and led the powerful action; other participating organizations included 50501 Veterans, Military Families Speak Out [see front page story], ***and the Center on Conscience and War. Veterans conducted a flag-folding ceremony, and played Taps on a bugle in honor of the first 13 service members to die in the war. They unfurled banners reading END THE WAR ON IRAN, WE CAN'T AFFORD ANOTHER WAR, and COST OF WAR IS TOO HIGH inside one of the most heavily trafficked public spaces in the U.S. Capitol. The action marks one of the largest veteran-led civil disobedience actions inside a Congressional building in recent years. Sixty-two protesters were arrested after refusing police orders to vacate the rotunda.***

VFP National Newsletter Spring 2026

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