

# Pacifica Peace Delegation Visits Congressman Lantos

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SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

A delegation from Pacifica met April 17 with Rep. Tom Lantos in his San Mateo office to deliver 560 signatures on a petition asking the Congressman to cosponsor and actively support the proposed U.S. Department of Peace (House Resolution 3760, authored by Rep. Dennis Kucinich).

"It went well," said Pacifica Peace People delegate Janet Hathaway. She was accompanied by Clark Natwick, Delia McGrath, and Brenda Girvin of PPP; Sue Digre, mayor of Pacifica; Sue Thompson, vicar of St. Edmund's Episcopal Church in Pacifica; and Margaret Jones, a San Mateo representative for the United Religions Initiative and for the Peace Alliance.

Each delegate provided his or her name, profession, and city of residence to assure Lantos that they were all his constituents.

Hathaway briefly described PPP's monthly meetings, regular military counter-recruitment in local high schools, monthly peace vigils, and educational programs (films, speakers, etc.) linking issues of war and peace with other global concerns such as climate change and personal responsibility for the environment.

Hathaway said, "Our culture should foster peace by planting seeds of peaceful change." She cited the Academy Award-winning movie "Crash" as "a diagnosis of our society, where hair-trigger violence lies just below the surface, and we live with insecurity, fear, and distrust. Differences in age, gender, wealth,

and abilities divide us."

But instead, she said, "we need to build connections with others, to emphasize our similarities and defuse the distrust. We need to find ways to practice patience and build confidence, to give our communities a sense of hope and future. We need to learn skills such as negotiation, mediation, diplomacy, community-building, and de-escalation of tensions."

"That's what Kucinich's bill [H.R. 3760] would do. It creates a cabinet-level Department of Peace. It would train people in patient negotiation and skillful communication that are prerequisites to building a culture of peace."

Other members of the group spoke with Lantos and his staff about how Kucinich's legislation could create a means to teach conflict resolution techniques for domestic disputes, family crises, urban tensions, regional disputes, and national and international disagreements.

Rep. Lantos expressed his deep and abiding interest in peace. He affirmed his commitment to human rights and his pride in having started the Human Rights Caucus in the House. He spoke of the atrocities in Darfur and his desire to find a peaceful solution to the Iran nuclear crisis.

Lantos mentioned his friendship with Kucinich, pledging to meet with him about the Department of Peace bill on his return to Washington.

Lantos also noted that the Department of State takes a dim view of the notion of a separate Department of Peace. Hathaway responded that the State Department has "conflicting portfolios, engaged both in diplomacy and in sabre-rattling (threatening, if

not actually coordinating, military options). The notion of a Department of Peace is not to usurp the State Department but to provide a truly different perspective, a non-military option," she said.

Lantos agreed to give the Department of Peace idea serious consideration. He then asked the peace delegates to join him for a group picture. And read on for a more detailed look at the Department of Peace bill and its origins.

## Root causes of violence

- Current policy-making tends toward reactive, not proactive, approaches to violence reduction.

- Traditional political problem solving focuses primarily on addressing symptoms of violence, such as imprisonment of offenders and engaging in armed conflict.

- Suppression of symptoms should be augmented by stronger preventive measures and treatment of root causes of violence.

- The United States should be as effective in addressing sources of violence as it is dealing with its symptoms.

## Why we need a Department of Peace

- To reduce domestic and international violence.

- To gather and coordinate information and recommendations from the peace community.

- To teach violence prevention and mediation skills to children and parents.



Photo courtesy of Pacifica Peace People

From left, back row: Clark Natwick, Tom Lantos, Delia McGrath, Sue Digre, Brenda Girvin and Margaret Jones. Front row: Baxter the dog, Janet Hathaway and Sue Thompson.

- To effectively understand and treat gang psychology.

- To rehabilitate prisoners.

- To build peace-making efforts among conflicting cultures both here and abroad.

- To support our military with complementary approaches to ending violence.

## Timeline of proposed federal legislation to establish a U.S. Department of Peace

- Bill introduced in House of Representatives during 107th and 108th Congress.

- Bill reintroduced in the House (H.R. 3760) and introduced for the

first time in the Senate (S. 1756) during the current session (the 109th Congress) in September 2005.

- Currently, 60 House members are committed cosponsors.

- Proposed legislation calls for Department of Peace budget to equal 2 percent of U.S. defense budget.