



PEACENOTES

A PUBLICATION OF THE PEACE EDUCATION CENTER



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CONTRIBUTORS:

Tom Oswald, *Editor*
Nelson Brown
Becky Payne
Terry Link
John Metzler
Paul Brun Del Re
Jim Detjen
Casey Orr
Will Lawrence
Samantha Dillon, *Designer*



The Legislature Passed Common-Sense Gun Laws; Now Comes the Hard Part

BY NELSON BROWN

After an historic political change in Michigan, our Legislature has adopted common-sense gun laws that will go into effect in March of 2024. Now the challenge may be to ensure that they are enforced. It is of utmost importance that these laws are enforced effectively and consistently to ensure the safety and well-being of our community.

The introduction of Red Flag laws, for instance, provides a vital mechanism for preventing potential harm by temporarily removing firearms from individuals who are at an elevated risk of committing acts of violence against themselves or others.

The implementation of safe storage measures where children are present can significantly reduce accidental firearm-related injuries or deaths, ensuring that responsible gun ownership and child safety go hand-in-hand.

Additionally, comprehensive background checks on all gun purchases help prevent firearms from falling into the wrong hands and will contribute to maintaining law and order in our county.

The Peace Education Center is deeply concerned about the possibility that some county prosecutors, sheriffs, and local police may use "Constitutional County," "Second Amendment Sanctuary," or other bogus legal theories not to enforce Michigan's recently enacted gun regulation laws. They may also adopt a de facto non-enforcement approach for political reasons.

The PEC firmly believes that these laws are a necessary step towards reducing gun violence in our state and that it remains crucial they are enforced.

The Constitutional Sheriff justification is a fringe legal theory holding that as the highest elected county official, the sheriff of a county can determine what state and federal laws are Constitutional,

especially laws they believe infringe on citizens' Second Amendment rights. Thus, the sheriff can find them unenforceable.

Barry County Sheriff, Dar Leaf, – a buddy of the militiamen convicted of attempting to kidnap Gov. Whitmer – has made such a claim.

The "Second Amendment Sanctuary" theory is a National Rifle Association-supported effort to give some counties – such as Ionia County – an unlawful fig leaf to avoid enforcing state and federal gun laws. Some conservative law enforcement officials may just use their discretion not to enforce these laws.

The laws were put in place to ensure that firearms are kept out of the hands of individuals who pose a threat to public safety. It is the duty of our elected officials to uphold and enforce these laws, and they should not be permitted to use preposterous legal theories or claimed discretion to avoid enforcing them.

We urge our fellow citizens to join us in advocating for the enforcement of these laws. Our safety should not be compromised for any reason. It is imperative that we take action to prevent gun violence and to create a safer environment for all Michigan residents. Let us stand together and demand that our officials do their part to protect us.

**ERPO
("RED FLAG")**

**SAFE STORAGE
LAWS**

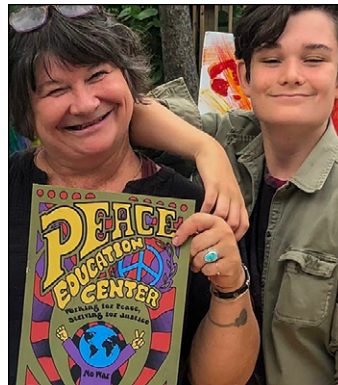
**BACKGROUND
CHECKS**



Chris and Elise Murphy



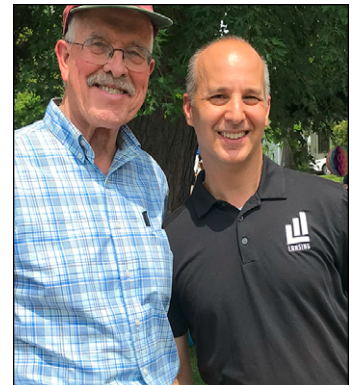
Mikey 23 Foundation



Shantel Rodriguez



Fun was had at the PEC table!



Jim Detjen with Lansing Mayor Andy Schor

Westside Blockparty

BY SHANTEL RODRIGUEZ

Chris and Elise Murphy are the proud parents of a blended family totaling seven kids and they have happily lived on the west side of Lansing for the last three years. A month ago, the family found themselves at a crossroads after an incident that left them feeling that the gun violence in Lansing hit too close to home.

They discussed moving, but realized instead that they would rather reach out to the community and use their energy to foster the kinds of relationships that create innate safety by opening up their doors instead of locking them in fear.

They organized a Block Party on Aug. 5th in front of their house and garnered an outpouring of support from the community in the form of donations, speakers, bounce houses, games, music, and food to raise awareness of gun violence and to also give their neighbors a place to gather and take back their neighborhood.

The Block Party was an effort to create a safe haven to break bread,

play music, listen to each other, and let Lansing know that her citizens are ready to do what it takes to work together to meet the needs of our neighbors and support each other in order to end this senseless violence.

Learn more about their philosophy and what drives the Murphy's to approach this issue with a restorative and mutual aid lens on our Peace Education Podcast, available soon here:



Military Spending – More, More, More and More

BY TERRY LINK



I seem to be experiencing a Groundhog Day scenario. Every year about this time of barbecue, beaches and baseball, Congress delves into working on the military budget, seeing just how much they can leech from our taxes to stuff in the pockets of the weapons industry.

This year, thanks in part to the recent Debt Ceiling Act, all agencies, save our folks at the Pentagon, will see a freeze. The **Pentagon will get an extra \$40 billion** or so (there is plenty of horse-trading to come this summer), making the lobbying visits and campaign contributions most of them receive a really good investment for the arms manufacturers.

As long as they keep supporting the industry, they are likely to be offered some position post-Congress to help convince newly elected members of the need for more weapons, more military bases, more enemies.

*“In 2021, the most recent year with complete stats, the nation’s top five weapons makers – Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Raytheon, General Dynamics, and Northrop Grumman – grabbed over **\$116 billion in Pentagon contracts and paid their top executives \$287 million,**” Pentagon-watcher William Hartung noted this past December. “An average of \$57 million each.”*

→ How Contractor CEOs get Rich off Taxpayers

The Pentagon is the only department in the government that cannot pass an audit. No bid contracts and cost overruns are standard procedure. Yet there is no accountability. The rare birds that call it out are ignored by almost everyone. The recent passage of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) by the House Armed Services Committee had a vote of 38-1. And no, our representative from mid-Michigan, Elissa Slotkin, was not the one saying, whoa, maybe this is too much.

We’ve been on this non-stop escalator since we were supposed to see a peace dividend at the end of the Cold War. We now spend more than 10 times what the Russians spend annually, and yet all that can’t stop the Russian invasion of Ukraine. We spent trillions destroying Iraq and Afghanistan while birthing ISIS and other terrorist spinoffs.

The latest axis of evil includes such global powers as Iran, North Korea, and China. We have how many bases in China’s backyard? How many do they have near us? **The climate change footprint of U.S. military, as noted by Veterans for Peace, is bigger than the total of many nations.**

Of course, the immediate future does not look promising for the struggle to convert our militaristic economy towards one of peace and prosperity. But there is a growing chorus from progressives and conservatives that this blank check operation needs to end. Some pieces of legislation, like Rep. Jan Schakowsky’s “Patriotic Corporations Act,” would give companies with smaller pay gaps between their CEOs and workers a leg up

in the bidding for federal defense contracts.

Rep. Barbara Lee and Sen. Bernie Sanders have introduced legislation to cut military spending by \$100 billion, a figure that research by the Congressional Budget Office determined would not decrease national security. Republicans have made sure there would not be a vote on it in the House, but there is a chance in the coming week as I write this, that the vote will occur in the Senate.

The House and the Senate will have dif-



ferent versions of NDAA that has to pass before the end of September. So, pressure from voters may help sway a few key votes to make a difference. If not, we’ll be back to try again next year. Our future needs us to reallocate our tax dollars to address climate change and inequality.

We can use your help.



PEC STATEMENT | JULY 8, 2023

U.S. CLUSTER BOMB SHIPMENT TO UKRAINE

Editor's Note: Earlier this year, the Biden Administration made the misguided decision to provide Ukraine with cluster bombs for use in its war against Russia. Shortly after that announcement, the Lansing Area Peace Education Center issued the following statement.

The recent announcement by the Biden Administration to ship cluster bombs to Ukraine for use in their war with Russia is a violation of the international Convention on Cluster Munitions (2008), signed by more than 120 countries, but not the U.S., Russia or Ukraine. The use of cluster bombs is a moral outrage.

The many "bomblets" released from every cluster bomb are designed to detonate on hitting the ground where anyone in the area is very likely to be killed or seriously injured. Just as bad, many bomblets fail to detonate immediately and lay on the ground where they will eventually be touched or picked up, resulting in an explosion.

Up to 40 percent of bomblets have failed to explode in some recent conflicts, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross. As a result, cluster bombs, like landmines, pose a risk to civilians long after their use. Unexploded ordinance from cluster bombs can kill and maim people years or even decades after the munitions were fired.

The Guardian report states: "Human rights groups say that the use of cluster bombs in populated areas is a violation of international humanitarian law because they cause indiscriminate destruction. Sixty percent of cluster bomb casualties are people injured while undertaking everyday activities, according to Reuters. One-third of all recorded cluster munitions casualties are children."

Human rights organizations have been raising concerns about reported Russian use of cluster bombs. Increasing the use of these weapons of war on either side is the opposite way to peace.

The Peace Education Center calls on our members of Congress to join us in demanding that President Biden and his administration rescind the shipment of cluster bombs to Ukraine and to abide by the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Please urge your representatives to support the amendment introduced by Rep. Omar and Rep. Jacobs to prohibit U.S. sale or transfer of cluster bombs to Ukraine.

It is long past time for the U.S. to join civilized nations in signing on to the Convention of Cluster Munitions which prohibits their production, distribution, and use. To do otherwise is to further slow the progress towards a lasting peace.

How do you End a War That Appears to be a Long-Term Stalemate?

BY NELSON BROWN

As the war in Ukraine reaches its one-and-half year anniversary, the promised Ukrainian Spring, now Summer, Offensive appears to have fizzled so far, although Ukraine is now attempting larger attacks. The Russian defense-in-depth- defense appears to have held the counter offensive to modest ground gains with heavy casualties and destruction of Western military hardware.

In one unsuccessful foray, loss of tanks and troop carriers was reported as 20 percent. The Ukrainian government has not reported on casualties, but they are probably very high because generally offensive casualties are heavier than well-positioned defensive forces.

While Ukraine and the U.S. hope that the Ukrainians can recover significant territory before winter arrives, it remains doubtful that even with more sophisticated Western weapons large territory can be recovered. While Ukraine and the U.S. equivocate



about the current likelihood of success, it appears that the war has reached a prolonged strategic stalemate, with neither side likely to achieve a decisive victory.

Considering this reality, pursuing a diplomatic settlement now seems to be the only realistic and sane way forward.

Of course, all parties recognize that at some point diplomatic negotiations will have to take place, but the Ukrainians and the U.S. want them to essentially be more like a Russian surrender after their complete defeat. But what if by the end of 2023, the stalemate continues with neither side able to anticipate likely success for their maximum expectations soon -- or maybe never? Do the Ukrainians and the U.S. doggedly continue the war hoping for a miracle, or for pride's sake, just be unwilling to acknowledge failure?

Continuing a winless and endless war with all the horror and destruction that entails seems like an immoral choice. By the end of 2023, everyone should understand whether either side's maximum hopes seem realistic. Regardless, the Ukrainians and the U.S. should seek negotiations now; it is common for negotiations to begin while the fighting continues.

Of course, negotiations may require that both sides make painful concessions. Ukraine, as a sovereign nation, has a rightful claim to Crimea and Eastern Ukraine. However, it is essential to recognize the geopolitical complexities at play, the interests of various involved parties, and the on-the-ground reality. Continuing the war without accepting these realities only perpetuates the stalemate, prolonging the suffering of

the Ukrainian people.

By pursuing a diplomatic settlement, both Ukraine and the international community can work towards mitigating the human toll of the conflict. Such a solution may involve compromises that are not ideal, but it offers the potential for sustainable peace and stability in the region.

The alternative of persistently pursuing a complete military victory, despite the evidence pointing to a prolonged stalemate, is a dangerous pathway. It risks pushing the conflict into further escalations, leading to an escalation of casualties and irreparable damage. It also continues the world-wide economic and social harm this war has generated.

Recognizing the limitations of the current situation does not imply surrender or abandoning principles, but rather a commitment to achieving the best outcome for Ukraine and its people. Emphasizing diplomatic efforts allows for potential negotiations, compromise, and the opportunity for Ukraine to regain control over some territories and focus on rebuilding and healing. It also prevents this war from denigrating into an even worse conflict, which at some desperate moment could see nuclear weapons used.



PEACE BOAT SAILS AGAIN FOR A NUCLEAR FREE WORLD!



PEACE EDUCATION CENTER

THE GOLDEN RULE

**August 15th
at 6:30pm**

**Red Cedar Friends
Meeting House
1400 Turner St, Lansing**

**Join us to make some waves
against nuclear weapons!**

Come meet the crew of Veterans for Peace sailing the original peace boat around the country to bring attention to the need to eliminate nuclear weapons. While the boat is in Detroit, the crew will visit Lansing. Come learn the history and how we can work to eliminate nuclear weapons!

Co-sponsored with Veterans for Peace
and Red Cedar Friends.



tinyurl.com/peace-boat



Crew of Golden Rule to Visit Lansing

By Tom Oswald

It was in 1958 that a ship called the Golden Rule set sail. Aboard her were a crew of anti-nuclear weapons activists. Their mission: To interpose themselves and the boat between the U.S. government and its atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons in the Marshall Islands in the Pacific Ocean.

Bad weather and sickness, not to mention the crew being arrested for their efforts, didn't deter them. And while they never re-

ally got in harm's way, their example helped ignite a storm of world-wide public outrage against nuclear weapons that resulted in the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty of 1963.

After falling into disrepair, the Golden Rule was recovered by the organization Veterans for Peace who restored it and are now sailing it again, showing that a nuclear peace is possible and that bravery and tenacity can overcome militarism.

After sailing up the Mississippi River, the Golden Rule is now looping through the Great Lakes, making several stops at Michigan ports, including Detroit.

This August, while the ship is docked in the Motor City, you will have the opportunity to meet the crew as they visit Lansing as they continue their efforts to bring attention to the dangers of nuclear weapons.

The Lansing Area Peace Education Center, Veterans for Peace, and Red Cedar Friends Meeting are hosting the event at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 15, at the Red Cedar Friends Meeting, located at 1400 Turner St. in Lansing's Old Town.

Everyone is invited to meet the crew, learn about their mission and ways in which you can help. Admission is free, but donations

are always welcome.

The threat of nuclear war continues to loom (just take a look at Ukraine) and the crew of the Golden Rule is doing all it can to call attention to that. The Golden Rule crew spreads the word about the continuing dangers of nuclear power, and the poisoning of the air, water, and soil from the entire nuclear cycle, from uranium mining to the disposal of nuclear waste.

The boat and its mission also have helped to inspire the ships of some of today's organizations, including the Sea Shepherds and GreenPeace.

The Peace Education Center is proud to bring the Golden Rule crew to Lansing.

→ GOLDEN RULE VISITS LANSING

→ GOLDEN RULE PROJECT

→ VETERANS FOR PEACE

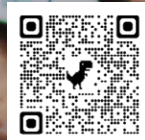


Greater Lansing

PEACEQUEST 2023!

SEPTEMBER 1 - 30

PeaceQuestGreaterLansing.org





Nuclear Threat Continues 78 Years On

BY TERRY LINK

August 6 and 9 are anniversaries of the only uses of nuclear weapons on humanity in Hiroshima and Nagasaki 78 years ago. But the scourge of nuclear weapons lives on.

The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists moved their Doomsday Clock closer to midnight earlier this year in recognition of increasing global threats. While the threat of nuclear war remains high, there are increasing efforts to reduce those threats and work towards the elimination of those indiscriminating weapons of massive death and destruction.

First among them is the passage of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (2017) which came into force in 2021 and now has 92 signatories. No surprise, but the U.S. and other nuclear weapon states are not among them. A necessary step on the way to the elimination of this scourge is their reduction in number.

The U.S. and Russia have suspended diplomatic efforts to reduce their large stockpiles and

little is moving forward among other nuclear states (France, United Kingdom, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea).

The list of civil society organizations marshalling efforts to reduce and eliminate these weapons is growing, both here and globally.

But we need to join our voices in pushing our elected leaders and others to act to reduce weapons, not expand them. The CBO estimates that plans for U.S. nuclear forces, as described in the fiscal year 2023 budget and supporting documents, would cost \$756 billion over the 2023–2032 period, \$122 billion more than CBO's 2021 estimate for the 2021–2030 period.

Is this an issue of concern for you? Would you be willing to join a few other local peacemakers to raise the issue as we are doing with our Mayors for Peace effort or hosting the Veterans for Peace crew from the Golden Rule anti-nuclear ship to work for the elimination of

- » Abolition 2000
- » Arms Control Association
- » Back From the Brink
- » Beyond the Bomb
- » Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists
- » Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
- » Center for Arms Control and Nonproliferation
- » Common Dreams- Envisioning a World Without Nuclear Weapons
- » Council for a Livable World
- » Don't Bank on the Bomb
- » Federation of American Scientists
- » Global Zero
- » ICAN International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons
- » International Peace Bureau
- » Nuclear Threat Initiative
- » Nuclear Weapons Ban Monitor
- » Physicians for Social Responsibility
- » Ploughshares Fund
- » SIPRI Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
- » Union of Concerned
- » UN Office of Disarmament Affairs
- » Unfold Zero

these now illegal weapons?

Please contact us and join in shaping the future to a more peaceful and secure world.



PeaceEdCenter@gmail.com

Oppenheimer Brings the Danger of Nuclear Weapons to the Big Screen

BY NELSON BROWN



If you constantly thought about a world where major American cities could be completely incinerated and

millions killed or horribly mutilated within an hour by nuclear weapons you would probably go crazy, but this is the world we live in. Of course, the natural reaction is not to dwell on this reality but rather to live our everyday lives and to think about less disturbing and more mundane things.

But if you saw the new movie, Oppenheimer, awareness of that possible horrible fate might have left you gobsmacked and maybe even pondering whether you should do something, no matter how small, to prevent an apocalypse.

Oppenheimer tells the dramatic story of the Manhattan Project, an effort led by nuclear physicist, J. Robert Oppenheimer, during World War II at Los Alamos, New Mexico, to develop the atomic bombs that were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki just before Japan surrendered. With great

acting and creative cinematography and editing, this fast-moving three-hour movie reveals the scientific genius, political machinations, personal turmoil, and the moral anguish that thrust this country and the world into the horror of the nuclear age.

It also shows Oppenheimer's personal but tragically unsuccessful efforts to, in some sense, put the nuclear genie back in the bottle. Of course, he knew that there was no undoing the knowledge of how the bomb was made; however, the development, spread and control of these monstrous weapons and their delivery systems could be controlled.

In the 1950s, his and anti-nuclear groups' efforts to achieve these goals were not successful, except for stopping above-ground nuclear testing. The single most likely explanation for this limited success was the Cold War struggle between the U.S.-led

military bloc, NATO, and the Soviet Union.

Today, with a few still viable agreements, the United States and Russia have thousands of deliverable nuclear weapons that can destroy both countries several times over within minutes. This movie thankfully brings awareness of the danger of these weapons to public consciousness.

But in the face of the military/industrial/foreign-policy complex supporting them, there are dedicated people and groups that are persistently and without great publicity, trying to push political leaders to bring these weapons under some kind of control, if not to eliminate them, then to limit their numbers and likelihood of use.

Along with other larger groups, the Peace Education Center has tried to carry on this work. **FOLLOW**



DEMOCRACY IN HOTTER TIMES

with Dr. David Orr

SEPTEMBER 14 @ 7 PM



gluna.org/event/democracy-in-hotter-times

Felon Disenfranchisement and Michigan's "Right" To Vote

BY CASEY E. ORR

Voting in local, state and federal elections is one of the purest expressions of American democracy, and it is a foundational part of the civic process. The so-called right to vote is available to all United States citizens above 18. However, this "right" can be stripped from those with a criminal conviction. Because of this, thousands of individuals cannot exercise a fundamental element of citizenship and vote in local, state or federal elections.

This policy is broadly known as Felon Disenfranchisement. In Michigan, disenfranchisement laws prevent individuals with a misdemeanor or felony conviction from voting while incarcerated. As a result, almost 50,000 Michiganders are unable to vote each year.

Felon Disenfranchisement laws have a long history, and contemporary United States laws originate from Medieval England. Felon Disenfranchisement laws were present in the Colonial Era, but the use and expansion of these policies grew exponentially following the Civil War. The rise of Felon Disenfranchisement loomed close behind the 14th Amendment giving Black men the right to vote. Lawmakers began formulating broad, vague crimes with disenfranchisement as one consequence of conviction. These new laws enabled law enforcement to target Black men, arrest them for petty crimes, and strip them of their newly granted right to vote.

These discriminatory policies persist, and incarcerated Michiganders cannot vote in any election.

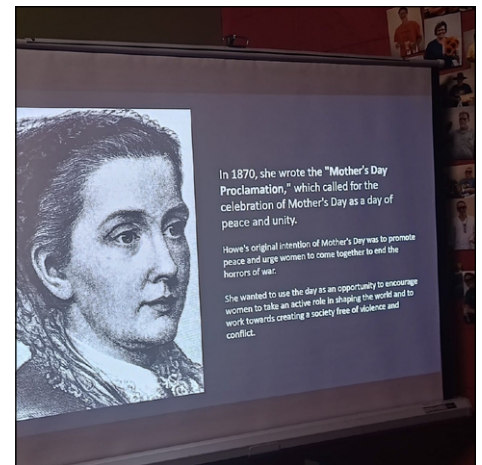
With violent origins, it is no surprise that contemporary Felon Disenfranchisement laws perpetuate harm in Michigan communities today. These laws still disproportionately impact BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color), especially Women of Color.

Many disenfranchised individuals have also reported feeling alienated from their communities due to the inability to vote.

As voting is the fundamental expression of American civic participation, it is no surprise that the stigma of disenfranchisement can decrease social bonds and increase the risk of reoffending. Furthermore, though many defend disenfranchisement laws as a deterrent to crime, this has been proven statistically untrue. Overall, it is clear that disenfranchisement causes more harm than good and perpetuates harm, both individually and systematically.

As it is, only two states retain the voting rights of all individuals, regardless of carceral status: Maine and Vermont. In November 2022, Michigan voters passed Proposal 2 and enabled an expansion of voting rights; however, it still did not address the widespread harms of Felon Disenfranchisement. Until the right to vote is protected for all Michiganders, reaching peace and justice in our communities will be impossible.





PEC Fundraiser Recalls Truth Behind Mother's Day

BY TOM OSWALD

On May 6, the Lansing Area Peace Education Center hosted an event that not only raised funds for the center, but also shed light on the real meaning of the annual event known as Mother's Day.

Long considered a day fraught with flowers and candy and brunches, all designed to honor Mom, the real intent of Mother's Day was to promote peace.

In fact, the original Mother's Day was initiated by Julia Ward Howe (who's best known for writing the lyrics to the "Battle Hymn of

the Republic") around 1870, hoping it would be a day for mothers to campaign for an end to war following the carnage of the American Civil War.

With that in mind, the PEC hosted "Mother's Day for Peace," which brought together family, friends and, yes, moms, to honor the day.

With music provided by popular local band Jackalope, and a special guest appearance by Julia Ward Howe herself, more than 50 people gathered at the Allen Street Neighborhood Center to pay homage to the day.

Snacks were provided, there was plenty of fun and fellowship.

It was on May 9, 1914, that President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day "as a public expression of love and reverence for the

mothers of our country."

For more information on the history of Mother's Day [CLICK HERE >>](#)

The Peace Education Center was especially grateful to Jackalope, which donated its time and talents for our fundraiser. A long-time supporter of the PEC, the band has played together for almost 10 years and is known for its delightfully upbeat style of vocally harmonized pop, rock and country covers.

[LEARN MORE ABOUT JACKALOPE! >>](#)



PEC Annual Meeting Honors Peacemakers

BY TOM OSWALD

More than 50 peace and justice advocates gathered at the University United Methodist Church on June 10 to take part in the Lansing Area Peace Education Center's annual meeting.

The event, dedicated to promoting local peace work and recognizing outstanding individuals in our community, included electing at-large board members and honoring community leaders and high school student awardees of the Tom Schneider Peacemaker Award.

In addition, PEC members provided an overview of the work accomplished by the center over the past year and shared their vision for the future.

At-large members elected to the board were John Masterson, Terry Link, Thasin Sardar, Shantel Rodriguez, Samantha Dillon, and Tom Oswald, as well as newcomers Casey Orr and Joy Ellen.

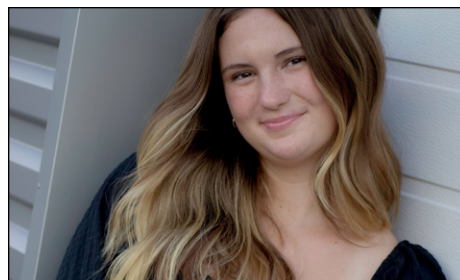
Earning this year's Tom Schneider Peacemaker Awards were **Avery Blair** of Okemos High School, **Isabella Grass** of Grand Ledge High School, **Katelyn Ryals** of Bath High School, and **Colin Scheib** of Bath High School.

The award is an annual tribute to the memory of long-time volunteer and activist, Tom Schneider. Applicants are chosen by a committee of the Peace Education Center, based on student essays, along with letters of recommendation verifying the student's ongoing commitment to peace and justice.

Earning **Peacemaker of the Year Awards** were **Ody Norkin**, for his efforts to provide health care for the people of Ukraine, and **Willie Bryan**, co-founder of the The Justice League of Greater Lansing, who is working to

provide faith-based reparations to the Black Community in Greater Lansing.

Receiving the **PEC's Lifetime Achievement Award** was **John Metzler**. Currently a member of the PEC Board, Metzler is also a board member and serves as Vice President for Global Education for GL-UNA (Greater Lansing United Nations Association). He also is a board member of MSU's Linking All Types of Teachers to International Cross-cultural Education (LATTICE), a learning community and international network that cultivates and supports a global perspective in K-12 classrooms through personal and professional development opportunities.



Driver's Licenses for All Michigan Residents

BY PAUL BRUN DEL RE

A package of bills referred to as the Drive SAFE (Safety, Access, Freedom, Economy) bills would restore driver's licenses to all Michiganders, regardless of immigration status. With Democrats taking power in both the Senate and House of Representatives in the state legislature for the first time in over 40 years, and with a Democratic governor in office many pieces of legislation are now moving forward.

Michigan legislators need to sponsor, reintroduce and vote YES on the Drive SAFE bills in the 2023 legislative term.

Prior to 2008, undocumented immigrants had access to driver's licenses. In late 2007 Attorney General Mike Cox issued a new opinion that an unauthorized immigrant could not be considered a Michigan resident. The Secretary of State complied and the state legislature codified the opinion into law.

A "resident" of Michigan became defined as someone who lives in the state and is "legally present." Legal presence means those who



are "authorized under federal law" to be in the U.S. Since Michigan residency is a requirement for a Michigan driver's license, the revised definition of residency also made "legal presence" a requirement. Hence, only lawful permanent residents or "green card" holders could be considered a Michigan resident under the law.

The Drive SAFE bills would eliminate the "legal presence" requirement from the definition of Michigan residency and allow all individuals living in Michigan access to a state ID or driver's license, regardless of immigration status.

"Our undocumented neighbors are business owners, parents, employees and caregivers. Allowing access to a driver's license means that those who do obtain one can engage in their communities, participate in our state economy more fully and complete everyday tasks without fear." (Michigan League for Public Policy on the Drive Michigan Forward website)

A number of different organizations and groups have expressed their support for the Drive SAFE bills. They include a variety of faith, business, farming, labor union, legal and advocacy groups. Some examples of these are the Michigan League for Public Policy, Michigan Farm Bureau, Michigan United, Action of Greater Lansing, Michigan Immigrant Rights Center (MIRC), and State Board of Education.

There are many benefits as result of having drivers' licenses for all in the state. Roads would be safer because undocumented people would need to pass driver's tests. More taxes and fees from auto purchases, licenses and insurance would bring more revenue to the state. Agriculture would benefit by having workers with reliable transportation and the ability to operate farm equipment on roads. Parents would be able to more fully partici-

pate in their children's education and school activities.

For more detailed information on Driver's Licenses for All go to the [Drive Michigan Forward website](#).

On April 12, 2023, the Drive SAFE (Safety, Access, Freedom, Economy) bills were introduced by the following sponsors:

- » **Senate Bill 0265** - Senator Erika Geiss, 1st Senate District
- » **Senate Bill 0266** - Senator Sylvia Santana, 2nd Senate District
- » **Senate Bill 0267** - Senator Stephanie Chang, 3rd Senate District
- » **House Bill 4410** - Representative Abraham Aiyash, 9th House District
- » **House Bill 4411** - Representative Rachel Hood, 81st House District
- » **House Bill 4412** - Representative Tyrone Carter, 53rd House District
- » **Senate Bills (SB 265 to 267)** have been referred to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.
- » **House bills (HB 4410 to 4412)** have been referred to the Committee on Regulatory Reform.

Please contact those introducing the legislation and co-sponsors to hold hearings on the [Drive SAFE bills](#).

You can also contact your state senator and representative to ask them to support these bills if they come to a vote on the House and Senate floor [HERE](#).

Restoring driver's licenses to all Michigan residents seems like a just, safe and economic benefit to the entire state.



RENT IS TOO DAMN HIGH.

The Message: Rent is Too Damn High

BY WILLIAM LAWRENCE

This is a dispatch from the Rent Is Too Damn High coalition, of which the Peace Education enter is an active and supportive member.

On Sept. 5, state legislators will be returning to regular session after their summer vacation. At 12:00 p.m. that day, hundreds of people from across Michigan will gather at the Capitol to demonstrate behind this simple and undeniable message: **THE RENT IS TOO DAMN HIGH!**

Weaponization of Schools is Dangerous and Concerning, but Not Unprecedented

BY JOHN METZLER

The commitment to public education in the U.S. is almost as old as the country. So too is the use of public schools as sites of cultural, social and political contestation.

From the formation of the first common schools, in late 18th century New England, debates over what is, (and what should not be) taught (the curriculum), how it should be taught (pedagogy) and by whom, was contested, often heatedly. As was the larger question: what are the primary goals (outcomes), and purpose, of public education?

While there was near universal agreement on the need to facilitate cognitive development through the three Rs, there was also a recognition that public education should be used as an instrument of cultural, social and political socialization. That is, schools, through curriculum and pedagogy, educate children to become productive, civically committed, and patriotic citizens.

However, there was not a consensus on the de-

Nearly 600 people have already **pledged to attend the demonstration**, including over 450 from the Lansing area alone. Allies from Detroit, Ann Arbor and Grand Rapids are also getting involved.

This event has been in the works since early February, and momentum has been steadily gathering. As a long-time organizer, I can report that enthusiasm for this issue is unusually high — it's nearly impossible to have a bad outreach conversation about housing right now.

Millions of Michiganders and thousands of Lansing area residents are burdened by the cost of rent. If they aren't renters themselves, they know somebody who is, maybe their children or a close friend. We are sick of unhealthy conditions and exploitative landlords. We are ready to talk about it, and do something about it!

Eighteen organizations and counting have endorsed the event, representing a wide range of housing-impacted constituencies. Michigan Tenants Assembly is a statewide network of tenant organizations fighting for better conditions building-by-building. Haven House is a well-respected local shelter that helps families facing homelessness. Nation Outside is a statewide advocacy group of returning citizens, many of whom face major barriers to housing when they return from prison. The Women's Center of Greater Lansing signed on because they have been hearing from dozens of low-income women who are struggling with housing insecurity. Sunrise MSU signed on because green housing is a core component of a Green New Deal. And the list goes on.

The Rent Is Too Damn High demonstration will call awareness to three policy solutions that could be implemented by the state of Michigan.

FIRST, to remove the statewide ban ("preemption law") prohibiting local governments from enacting rent-control policies. Rent control is an important tool in policymakers' toolbox to be able to limit exorbitant rent hikes that price out residents.

SECOND, to invest \$4 billion in social housing. Social housing is gaining traction around the country as renters and public officials look for alternatives to the private market monopoly on our housing supply. This housing would be publicly owned, mixed-income, rent stabilized, and democratically accountable. The Michigan State Housing Development Authority has set a goal to build 75,000 new housing units over the next 5 years, and this \$4 billion investment in social housing would help reach that goal.

THIRD, to invest \$1 billion in 'housing first' programs. These are programs focused on people who are homeless, and the point is, you guessed it, to give them housing, first. Dozens of real-life studies show that dignified housing is the first step to stability for unhoused people, and that's what housing first is about. This funding would support the many groups who are already doing this work but with a grave deficit of resources.

These solutions are ambitious, but within reach given the present conditions at the state legislature. People power can make it happen. It's up to all of us to raise the cry: **The Rent Is Too Damn High!** See you on Sept. 5.

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STATE CAPITOL ON
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sired characteristics of an ideal citizen. These questions have been controversial and contested from the late 18th century through the current vociferous debates over Critical Race Theory, Don't Say Gay, and Wokeism, etc., in our nation's schools.

Of course, pointing out that our public schools have always been sites of cultural and political contestation does not mean that we should not be concerned by the vitriolic rhetoric and concrete legislative and executive actions to suppress the rights of minoritized groups in schools.

We must be vigilant and engaged in active resistance to these efforts to discriminate against people of color, the LGBTQTI communities, the suppression of teaching the actual history of our country, and the widespread banning of books that reflect diversity and the lived experiences of all communities represented in our diverse schools.

While we are familiar with the political theater created around these issues by politicians such as Ron DeSantis, we also need to be equally concerned by actions taken by far-right white supremacy and Christian nationalist groups that have attempted, all to successfully, to disguise and normalize their virulently racist, misogynistic and anti-LGBTQTI agenda for public schools by adopting the moniker of parent's rights, and framing of progressive agenda as cancel culture, and wokeism.

The scary success of groups such as Moms for Liberty is thoroughly investigated in a recently released report, *Returning to the Schoolhouse Steps: Extremist Groups Reactionary Anti-Student Inclusion Efforts* (2022) by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Their review of the research literature indicates that by the end of 2022 there were 84 anti-student inclusion bills pre-filed or introduced in 26 states. Equally concerning, the SPLC review reports on a national survey of high school principals on challenges by parents or community groups: 50 percent of the principals reported external interventions centered on race; 33 percent of the principals reported external challenges to books in their school libraries; and, 48 percent of the principals reported external challenges related to LGBTQTI student rights.

The progressive peace and justice community must be vigilant and demonstrate a commitment equal to that shown by groups such as Moms for Liberty, to engage the school debate at the local school board level, state, and national levels. We must work to make sure that all schools are safe and welcoming spaces for all students and that school curricula critically engage both the actual history of our nation, and contemporary issues such as globalization, militarism, inequality and climate change.

FCNL Lansing Advocacy Team Working For You

BY KATHLEEN ZEMCIK

The Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) is a national, nonpartisan Quaker organization that lobbies Congress and the administration to advance peace, justice, and environmental stewardship.

Along with the leadership of the organization, that is based in Washington D.C., there are small Advocacy Teams nationwide that actively support the work. These are small, diverse groups that meet monthly with their counterparts on a Zoom format.

Michigan has several active teams, including one that consists of about a dozen volunteers from the greater Lansing area. Teams from California to Vermont feel a vibrant camaraderie. The training and subsequent communication to all team members is top-notch.

Summer is a time when Congressional members are back in their communities, walking in parades and holding town halls. It is also the time when the teams try to meet, either face-to-face or through Zoom, with a member or their staff. It is the time between the House of Representatives proposed (2024) budget and the move to the Senate for the next review and proposal.



Michigan Sen. Debbie Stabenow is retiring this year. The month of July has brought to light several seekers of her Senate seat which Michigan Advocacy Teams will be watching. The focus this summer is to let members know that devastating cuts and funding elimination for diplomacy, peacebuilding, economic development, climate adaptation, migration, and humanitarian assistance will not stand.

Specifically, FCNL is lobbying for maintaining allocations for proven programs. These three accounts, The Complex Crisis Fund (\$66 Million), The Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act (\$25 Million), and Reconciliation Program (\$40 Million), are in the Department of State, Foreign Operations budget.

The House Appropriations subcommittee has presented a version of appropriations with devastating cuts, including a 50 percent cut to the Complex Crisis Fund, a 40 percent cut to Migrant and Refugee Assistance, and, also, no funding at all for Atrocities Prevention.

The House bill went against the Biden-McCarthy debt ceiling resolution, totally ignoring the specifications. With tactics like this, the "summer job" for all advocacy team members will not be easy.

For more information, visit the [FCNL website](https://www.fcnl.org) at www.fcnl.org.



SIGN UP!

There's still time to host an event during PeaceQuest 2023!

PeaceQuestGreaterLansing.org





Michigan Legislator Contact Information

Sen. Sam Singh

517-373-3447
Post Office Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909
SenSSingh@senate.michigan.gov

State Rep. Penelope Tsernoglou

517-373-2668
N-1094 House Office Building
Lansing, MI 48909
PenelopeTsernoglou@house.mi.gov

State Rep. Julie Brixie

517-373-0218
N-1092 House Office Building
Lansing, MI 48909
juliebrixie@house.mi.gov

State Rep. Emily Dievendorf

517-373-2277
N-1096 House Office Building
Lansing, MI 48909
EmilyDievendorf@house.mi.gov

Rep. Elissa Slotkin

202-225-4872
2245 Rayburn House Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20515
www.slotkin.house.gov/contact

Sen. Gary Peters

202-224-6221
Hart Senate Office Building
Suite 724
Washington, D.C. 20510

517-377-1508

124 West Allegan Street
Suite 1400
Lansing, MI 48933
www.peters.senate.gov/contact/email-gary

Sen. Debbie Stabenow

202-224-4822
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-2204

Sen. Debbie Stabenow

517-203-1760
221 W. Lake Lansing Road
Suite 100
East Lansing, MI 48823
www.stabenow.senate.gov/contact

Rep. John Moolenaar

202-225-3561
117 Cannon House Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20515
moolenaar.house.gov/contact/email

Rep. Tim Walberg

202-225-6276
2266 Rayburn House Office Bldg, Washington, DC 20515
walberg.house.gov/contact/

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Peace Education Center
1120 S Harrison Rd
East Lansing, MI 48823



PeaceEdCenter@gmail.com



PeaceEdCenter.org

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