

MEDIA ADVISORY

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For Immediate Release

Event: Friday rally and march continues count down for March 19th Mobilization: “Fund Education, Health Care, Jobs and the Environment – Not War!”

Date: Friday, February 24th, 2006

Time: 5:00 p.m.

Place: Pioneer Courthouse Square, SW Broadway & SW Yamhill, downtown Portland

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**Friday rally and march continues count down for March 19th Mobilization:
“Fund Education, Health Care, Jobs and the Environment – Not War!”**

The *Portland Peaceful Response Coalition*’s Friday rally and march continues this week in a count down through the themes for the big rally and march set for the third anniversary of the US war on Iraq on March 19th. “Today we’re focused on the other costs of this misguided and criminal war and occupation, the costs to the basic elements of our civil society here in the US, as well as the humanitarian aid that we could be providing to other countries if only the Bush Administration weren’t squandering hundreds of billions of dollars in wars and occupations,” said Mikel Clayhold, a volunteer with PPRC. “For the city of Portland alone, the price tag for the war in Iraq has been calculated at \$298 million, which is probably a very conservative estimate, an amount that could have paid for over 14,000 four-year scholarships at our public universities, health insurance for more than 178,000 local children, annual funding for over 39,000 Head Start students, a year’s salary for 5,000 public school teachers, or over 2,600 housing units.”

As with past mobilizations for peace here in Portland, a prominent theme for the March 19th rally and march against the war and occupation in Iraq is a call to “Fund Education, Health Care, Jobs and the Environment – Not War!” The focus on the costs to domestic spending on human services coincides with a campaign by the national organization, *United for Peace and Justice*. “With Bush asking for another \$72 billion for his bloody war in Iraq, that brings the totals to \$120 billion for Iraq and Afghanistan for 2006, over and above the \$432 billion that the military is already spending this year, and also in addition to the more than \$250 billion that has already been spent on this war,” said William Seaman, another volunteer with PPRC. “We’re asking folks to call our representatives and senators in Washington, DC, this coming Tuesday, February 28th, to tell them ‘Not one penny more for war!’”

The campaign to stop the funding for war challenges the view that opposing this funding is tantamount to not supporting the US troops in Iraq. Organizers accuse the Bush administration of using the troops as a shield for failed policies. “This is the same administration that sent US troops into Iraq without adequate armor either for themselves or their vehicles, all the while lavishly enriching their buddies at Halliburton and ignoring the gross financial fraud and mismanagement that has left Iraq a devastated, looted country,” said Seaman. “We say the way to support the troops is to bring them home now, pay reparations for the damage Bush has done to the Iraqi people and their country, and make our national budget a budget for peace and humanity, not for war and corruption.”

The regular weekly gathering will be marching from Pioneer Courthouse Square to the big commute arteries of downtown Portland this week and in the remaining weeks prior to the big March 19th mobilization. “Today we’ll be unveiling banners and ‘Burma Shave’ peace signs to take the word directly to the good people of Portland as they head home for the weekend,” said Clayhold. “We’re calling on folks to tell their neighbors, family, friends, co-workers and casual acquaintances that the people of the Pacific Northwest will once again be rallying and marching for peace, at Waterfront Park on March 19th.” The Friday rally will be heading down to the Hawthorne Bridge today to greet commuters with signs and banners urging support for the March 19th event.

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