

Department of Peace

By Congressman Dennis J. Kucinich

As the new millennium started, Rep. Dennis J. Kucinich (D.—Ohio), introduced the Genetically Engineered Food Right to Know Act in Congress, which would require mandatory labeling of GE foods. He has also proposed other visionary measures, including a Department of Peace. Rep. Kucinich, who observes a balanced whole grain-centered diet, welcomes comments or suggestions for further refinement of his proposal, from which excerpts follow. He may be contacted c/o House Office Building, 1730 Longworth, Washington, DC 20515.—Editor

Title: Department of Peace

There shall be established a Cabinet-level Department of Peace, which shall be of the Executive Branch of the Government. The Department of Peace shall hold peace as an organizing principle, coordinating service to every level of American society. It shall be oriented toward the development of human potential. It shall be enabled to strengthen non-military means of peacemaking. It shall endeavor to promote justice and democratic principles to expand human rights. It shall seek to create peace, to prevent violence, to divert from armed conflict, to use field-tested programs and to develop new structures in non-violent dispute resolution. The Department of Peace shall be charged with taking a proactive, strategic approach in the development of policies which promote strategies for conflict prevention, non-violent intervention, mediation, peaceful resolution of conflict and structured remediation of conflict. It shall address matters both domestic and international in scope. It shall endeavor to derive its strength from a structure which encourages the development of initiatives from local communities, religious groups and non-governmental organizations. A Secretary of Peace shall be appointed by the President, with the advice and consent of the Senate.

Peacemaking

The Department of Peace shall be dedicated to peacemaking and the study of conditions which are conducive to peace. It shall be empowered in all matters pertaining to conflict resolution, including observation, analysis, control, cooperation and prognosis of the dynamics of conflict at all levels, personal, interpersonal small groups, organizational and mass conflict. It shall work proactively and interactively with all branches of government on all policy matters relating to conditions of peace. The act shall provide for the transfer of appropriate agency functions to the Peace Department.

Responsibilities

It shall be charged with the responsibility for monitoring and analyzing causative principles of conflict and to make policy recommendations for developing and maintaining peaceful conduct. It shall determine whether and which conditions call for peacemaking and shall be empowered to be proactive.

Administration and Policy Development

The Department of Peace shall call on the intellectual and spiritual wealth of the nation and seek participation in its administration and in its development of policy from civil rights leaders, religious leaders, labor leaders; non-government organizations; active duty enlisted military personnel and retired veterans of the military; educators, semanticists, and linguists; business executives; holistic practitioners, including those in medicine and nutrition; family physicians, school nurses, psychologists, and scientists; philosophers, anthropologists and sociologists.

It shall further enlist the participation of writers, artists, including performing artists, coaches from high school, college and professional athletics, motivational speakers; and others at community levels, including neighborhood leaders and law enforcement personnel whose involvement in society has provided experience as to which conditions create peace or the absence of peace, and how peace may be maintained.

Domestic Application

The Department of Peace shall be empowered to develop policies which address domestic violence, including, but not limited to, spousal abuse, child abuse, and mistreatment of the elderly. It shall endeavor to create new policies which are responsive to the challenges of drug and alcohol abuse, and of crime. It shall analyze present policies, employ successful, field-tested programs; and develop new approaches for dealing with the implements of violence, including gun-related violence and the overwhelming presence of handguns in our society, school violence, gangs, racial or ethnic violence, violence against gays and lesbians, and police-community relations disputes. It shall be charged with making policy recommendations to the Department of Justice regarding civil rights and labor law. It shall assist in the establishment and funding of community-based violence prevention programs, including violence prevention counseling and peer mediation in schools. It shall counsel and advocate on behalf of women victimized by violence. It shall provide for public education programs and counseling strategies concerning hate crimes. It shall promote racial and ethnic tolerance.

Education

The Department of Peace shall develop a peace education curriculum, and, in cooperation with the Department of Education, it shall commission the development of such curricula and make available to local school districts, to enable the utilization of peace education objectives at all elementary and secondary public schools in the United States. Such curriculum shall include studies of the civil rights movement in the United States and throughout the world, with special emphasis on how individual endeavor and involvement have contributed to advancements in peace and justice. Peace educations shall equip students to become skilled in achieving peace through reflection and meditation and instructed in the ways of peaceful conflict resolution. Peace education

shall include the study of peace agreements and circumstances where peaceful intervention has worked to stop conflict. The Department of Peace, in cooperation with the Department of Education, shall offer incentives in the form of grants and training to encourage the development of state peace curricula and to assist schools in applying for such curricula.

The Department of Peace shall maintain a web page for the purposes of soliciting and receiving ideas for the development of peace from the wealth of political, social and cultural diversity. It shall call forth America's youth, for the purposes of creative peacemaking, and shall proactively engage the critical thinking capabilities of grade school, high school and college students via the Internet and other media. It shall issue periodic reports concerning such submissions. The Department of Peace shall provide for the funding of Peace Studies Departments in colleges and universities across the country and for the creation of a Peace Academy which shall become co-ordinate in structure and in resources with existing military service academies.

International Application

The Department of Peace shall be coordinate and complementary to the Department of Defense and the Department of State on all matters relating to the national security, including the protection of human rights and the prevention of, amelioration of, and de-escalation of unarmed and armed international conflict. It shall provide for the training of all U.S. personnel who administer post-conflict reconstruction and demobilization in war-torn societies. It shall sponsor country and regional conflict-prevention and dispute resolution initiatives, create special task forces, and draw on local, regional and national expertise to develop plans and programs for addressing the root sources of conflict in troubled areas.

The Department shall provide for citizen exchanges and for exchanges of legislators. It shall encourage the development of international sister cities programs, pairing US cities with cities around the globe for artistic, cultural, economic and educational exchange. It shall be authorized to administer the training of civilian peacekeepers to support civilian police who participate in civilian peacekeeping. Together with the Department of the Treasury, it shall strengthen peace enforcement through hiring and training monitors and investigators to help with the enforcement of international arms embargoes and sanctions against terror-ists and human rights abusers.

Consultation

There shall be established a formal process of consultation of the Department of Peace by the Department of State and the Department of Defense, prior to the initiation of any armed conflict between the U.S. and any other nation, or by the U.S. for any matter involving the use of State Department or Defense Department personnel within the U.S.

Peace Day

The first day of each year, January 1, shall be designated as Peace Day in the United States and all citizens should be encouraged to observe and celebrate the blessings of peace and endeavor to create peace in the coming year. The day shall include discussions of the lives of peacemakers.

The Department of Peace shall be financed based on a formula which is indexed at one percent of the total annual budget of the Department of Defense.

Rep. Dennis J. Kucinich is the U.S. Representative from the 10th District in Ohio. He served as Mayor of Cleveland and in Congress has been active on issues related to food, health, peace, and the environment.

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