

I am Henry Lowendorf. I live at 42 Young St. I am speaking on behalf of the Greater New Haven Peace Council.

The Board of Alders made a wise decision to hold hearings and listen to our young people. I attended the hearing at Wilbur Cross High School. The youth there made some excellent, logical, thoughtful and above all candid statements. Here are three:

- *If a kid doesn't respect life – he won't respect a curfew and a \$75 fine. What is \$75 to a drug dealer?*
- *There is already a law against killing, against illegal guns. If a person is prepared to use an illegal gun to shoot someone, will he abide a curfew?*

We need places for recreation for youth, need jobs.

Recreation facilities and jobs was a constant refrain.

The adults in New Haven should take heart from such youth leadership. And we adults need to show as much courage as our youth did in speaking so directly and honestly to the Board.

Because the city of New Haven is strapped for funds, I believe that the Board thinks it has little power to make the huge changes that the wider society desperately needs. I want to suggest that the Board really does have some power.

The city of New Haven is not alone in suffering from dramatically increased gun violence involving youth. We join Boston, Hartford, Oakland and other cities throughout the U.S.

All this violence throughout the country - are our youth not modeling their elders? Just one example - Our national leaders have sent nearly 3,000 of our young men and women to their deaths in Iraq; with 22,000 wounded. And our national leaders have condemned 650,000 Iraqis to early graves. What an example they have set for our children! If our leaders solve their problems and conflicts with murder and mayhem, should we not expect **that** behavior to rub off on the children at home? But what can the Board of Alders do about this?

Before I answer this question, let me make a couple more relevant observations.

Since it began and through September of this year, the war on Iraq has cost U.S. taxpayers \$378 billion. For taxpayers of New Haven, that war has sucked \$184 million from our city. \$184 million from New Haven to Iraq! (National Priorities Project)

Our country spends \$250 million every day to carry out the war on Iraq. Our beautiful New Haven's portion of that is \$122,000. Every day \$122,000 of our local taxes goes into death and destruction. Could the city use an extra \$122,000 every day? That's \$45 million every year.

How far would \$45 million go to rehab buildings for youth recreation? How many jobs could we create with \$45 million for youth so that they can give back their energies productively to our community? How many art, music, craft, athletic and similar programs could we put back into our schools with \$45 million a year?

So to reiterate my earlier question: what can the Board of Aldermen do to get back the \$45 million for our youth?

Well, for one the Board can counter the taking of our youth to send abroad to kill. The Board can instruct the Dept. of Education that our students are not to be stalked by military recruiters as a result of the No Child Left Behind law. Just help parents and students to opt out. Cost to the Board – nothing. Not a dollar.

Second, the recent election is acknowledged widely as a mandate for peace. The Board can petition our Congressional Representatives - Rosa DeLauro, Chris Dodd and Joe Lieberman - to defund the war. Petition them to endorse and co-sponsor bills that stop funding the war. There **are** already bills in Congress that call for funding the return of our troops to our own soil, but not for continuing the war. Cost to the Board for such petitioning. Nothing.

Third, the Board can ask every other town and city throughout CT to join it in such petitions. There is no cost to such a request. The return on such petitions can be millions of dollars.

The Board can add to its petition the demand that the savings from ending the war, \$45 million a year - it's our tax money after all - be returned to New Haven.

This is an emergency. Our youth are killing and being killed at home and they are killing and being killed abroad. The Board has recognized the emergency. It needs to recognize that it has power over solutions that arise from beyond the town lines.

Half a century ago President Dwight Eisenhower said: "I think that people want peace so much that one of these days governments had better get out of their way and let them have it."

Well, rather than getting out of the way, I urge our Board of Aldermen to join the people and insist that the federal government let us have peace. And put our tax money where it is needed: Here at home. And do it Now.

Thank you.

Peace ^ Justice

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Board of Alders
Committee of the whole
Hearing on proposed youth curfew
2006 Nov. 30
Wilbur Cross High School

Some comments from students at the Wilbur Cross hearing:

The school allocates money for advanced placement or athletics but nothing in between.

We need places for recreation for youth, need jobs. [Recreation facilities and jobs was a constant refrain.]

If a kid doesn't respect life – he won't respect a curfew and a \$75 fine. What is \$75 to a drug dealer?

There is already a law against killing, against illegal guns. If a person is prepared to use an illegal gun to shoot someone, will he abide a curfew?

If you keep telling us we're bad kids, we'll act bad. People will rebel against the law.

We need programs to teach cops how to deal with youth.

The curfew will force problems to happen earlier in the day.

This violence is an issue about parents.

If at 15 you don't pay attention to your parents, how is a curfew going to change that?

*You send kids home – but what is home? A roof and four walls.
[The gangs are more family than the biological family.]*

Some adults commit crimes too. Should you impose a curfew on adults?

Those kids who care about their future will be hurt.

Lots of teens don't like hanging out with their families.

We go to play basketball at Farnam and have to pay. We don't have money. We need recreation areas near our homes. We need jobs.

Give us money to come up with solutions.

I practice until 8:00, catch a bus and am home by 9:00. What if I miss my bus - will the police arrest me?

Why are you not listening to kids on the street? Those sitting in this auditorium are the good kids.

You guys put the HIV/AIDS awareness curriculum in middle and high school. Same with teen pregnancy. Well kids getting HIV/AIDS and teen pregnancy went down. The program was successful. So do that with gang violence.

“Boston, once a model city in America's battle against gun violence, faces a surge in homicides blamed by local authorities on cuts in federal funding for police on the beat, a rise in illegal gun trafficking and a fast-growing inner-city youth population.” – Reuters, 9 February 2006