

Tax Rally Talk, April 15, 2017

Thank you for your activism. You and all the activists speaking out since November 8, are the antidote to discouragement and despair. So please keep it up.

Today, we are focusing on one of the many elephants in the room – the failure of POTUS to open his tax records to the public. Of course we want to know what he is paying. We want to know how his investments are influencing his decisions, since he has failed to set up a blind trust.

With the recent dropping of Raytheon-produced bombs in Syria we need to know whether he still holds investments in that company as he did in 2015. It is outrageous that a decision like bombing another country might have been influenced by POTUS's stock holdings.

Of course all the weapons manufacturers have been doing well, especially since the budget proposal was released calling for a \$54 billion increase in spending for war.

Since the Vietnam War LEPOCO has been speaking out about our distorted priorities – about how many of our problems as a country could be better addressed if we spent money on books not bombs, on jobs not war, on food not troops.

We've also advocated persistently for diplomacy not war in Vietnam, in El Salvador and Nicaragua, in Afghanistan and Iraq, in Syria and Yemen. We have applauded when diplomacy worked as preventative like the Iran Nuclear Agreement of 2015 and the 2016 openings with Cuba.

We learned long ago that most any form of domestic spending produces more jobs than we will ever gain from spending on weapons.

We welcomed the wisdom of Rep. Barbara Lee who said in 2001 as she cast the solo vote against the war in Afghanistan, "Let us not become the evil we deplore." Unfortunately, we did not listen to Barbara Lee as we have seen the extreme militarization of our foreign policy morph into militarization as solution at home – look at our southern border, look at the militarized police forces hardened with military left-overs in our cities, look at the militarized response at Standing Rock.

There is a long history to this trend, but as with so many of the directions in which the new POTUS is taking us, what we are seeing now, and what we are seeing proposed, is taking us to even more destructive places.

We need to remind ourselves that even with the proposed \$54 billion increase, our military spends as much as the next 13 nations combined. We spend nearly 40% of ALL the money spent globally on "defense" or war.

The proposed \$54 billion increase alone is about equal to the total military budget of the United Kingdom. If we were spending only the \$54 billion we would still have the seventh largest military budget in the world.

Our current military budget is about \$600 billion. If you add in homeland security, intelligence agency spending, secret military technology, Department of Energy work on bombs, the Veterans Administration efforts to heal the losses of war, and military-related debt, that reaches close to \$1 trillion a year or \$2.7 billion a day on the military and its related efforts.

The Cost of War Project says that instead of a 10% increase in military spending we could decrease the military budget by 10 to 20% and be safer (even if you define safety in military terms).

Even military leaders call for increased spending on diplomacy. The proposed budget calls for a 28% cut at the State Department.

Military leaders call for doing more to address climate change to lessen the unrest that will result as the climate warms. This budget would cut the Environmental Protection Agency by one-third. Importantly, the military is the greatest consumer of petroleum in the U.S. and it is one of the world's worst polluters.

And I haven't even talked about the damages our perpetual wars are creating in the world. Our airstrikes in Iraq and Syria have killed as many as a thousand civilians in March alone.

55 members of the House of Representatives are calling for Congressional debate before we get further involved in the war in Yemen where the country is on the brink of famine. We need negotiations, not more arms sales to Saudi Arabia enabling their blockade against food imports to Yemen.

Instead of upgrading our nuclear weapons why not upgrade our public schools and public transit.

Instead of spending \$3 billion on immigration enforcement and border militarization let's spend tax dollars to support safe alternative energy and serious treatment of those suffering from drug addiction and mental health problems.

Let's save public broadcasting, the arts, legal services, food stamps, clean water, endangered species, meals on wheels, AmeriCorps, Community Action programs, etc., etc., etc.

Let's join other nations working to rid the world of nuclear weapons. Let's start a diplomacy offensive in North Korea, Syria and elsewhere, rather than continue the bombings and threatening bombings that will not work and will create so much pain and death.

If our country was known for providing clean drinking water, schools, medicine, and solar panels to others, instead of attacking and invading other countries, imagine how much more secure we would feel – imagine the lessened global hostility.

Remember that in 1967 the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., said, *"A true revolution of values will lay hand on the world order and say of war, 'This way of settling differences is not just.'*

"This business of burning human beings with napalm, of filling our nation's homes with orphans and widows, of injecting poisonous drugs of hate into the veins of peoples normally humane, of sending men home from dark and bloody battlefields physically handicapped and psychologically deranged, cannot be reconciled with wisdom, justice and love.

"A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death."

Let us help create the revolution of values Dr. King called for 50 years ago.

Nancy C. Tate