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Peace Economy Project urges Congress to cut defense spending

Mary Ann McGivern | Jun. 20, 2013 NCR Today

I'm on the board of directors of the Peace Economy Project [1]. I was one of the founders and served as director in the 1970s and '80s. Then I stepped away. They say when an organization has its third director, you know it has staying power. Well, PEP is on its sixth director, and I am very happy to be part of the group.

PEP researches military spending and tracks weapons production and bases in the St. Louis region. It used to be that 16 percent of the region's jobs were directly or indirectly dependent on Pentagon dollars. But jobs have been outsourced overseas and replaced with technology. Still the Department of Defense budget rises.

PEP has had director turnover because salaries are low. The job has been a stepping stone that has led to careers in international service, peace research, political activism and social work. Hiring and training new staff is a drag, but those of us on the board are proud of the accomplishments of our previous directors, and we have developed some deliberate strategies for giving our director, interns and volunteers experience in making the case for a peace economy.

One of the recurring actions is a congressional appeal to cut the military budget [2]. PEP sends our director and an intern to Washington, D.C., each summer to deliver the appeal personally to the senators and congressional representatives of everyone who signs the appeal. It's a great expression of grass-roots lobbying. People who sign the appeal know where it's going, and they get a firsthand report on how it was received. Our young representatives meet with other activists here in preparation, then meet some of their counterparts in Washington.

This is a small, personal effort to urge Congress to cut the Department of Defense budget. Take a look [2].

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Links:
[1] http://peaceeconomyproject.org/wordpress/
[2] http://peaceeconomyproject.org/wordpress/?p=1298