

# Update

Winter 2019

Ron Zucker, Editor

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## Local

### January 13 Meeting

#### **Journalist Peter Byrne on the “Forever War”**

Science writer and investigative journalist Peter Byrne has lately been preoccupied with what he sees, in recent history, as the “new” military strategy of the U.S. It is a strategy marked by a call for ever more war funding and identifying most of the planet as the “Enemy”. This vision and its funding have become part of a military machine enabled by both Democrats and Republicans in our government.

The often-cited motivation is the “global war on terror”, which for Peter brings up questions regarding what terrorism is and is not, as well as the root causes of extremist violence on both the left and right. There is also the question of the real motivation for planting our military presence all around the world; economic globalization in general and oil resources in particular seem to play a significant part in this story. They in turn help motivate the extremism that feeds the war on terror.

On Sunday, January 13, Peace Action of San Mateo County will present Peter, who will give a talk entitled “Inducing Chaos: The foundational design of the ‘forever war’ – and what we can do to stop it.” Along with laying out the elements of a war without end, Peter will offer not just obvious practical reasons for ending it, but also what he calls “lessons of evolutionary biology to consciously chart a path for humanity to escape the ashes of Empire and restore life to the burning planet.” While a great deal of political will is required to go down that path, Peter will endeavor to share how it can be done.

The January 13 event begins at 7 PM at the Unitarian Universalists of San Mateo, 300 E. Santa Inez Avenue in San Mateo. Admission is free, contributions will be welcome. The UUSM is wheelchair accessible.

North Bay journalist Peter Byrne combines investigative reporting with science writing. In 2017, his 11-part series in the Point Reyes Light, “Busted: Breast Cancer Money and the Media” won the top science writing award from the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Peter reports on terrorism and its twin, counterterrorism, from epicenters of violence such as Mosul, Iraq and Orange County. He also writes for pub-

lications that include Scientific American, Mother Jones and the North Bay Bohemian.

We hope you’ll be present for Peter’s unique perspective on problems and solutions in the “forever war”.

### Summary of November 19 Meeting

#### **Erlich’s Facts on U.S. Policy on Iran**

Freelance foreign correspondent Reese Erlich, whose “specialty” is the Middle East region, began his talk to Peace Action with the murder of Saudi journalist and U.S. resident Jamal Khashoggi at the apparent hands of his government. “Let’s assume for the moment,” he said, “that (the accused country) was Iran and not Saudi Arabia”. He suggested that “we would be at or near a state of war”, but that no such situation now existed, and there so far was little recourse beyond the denial of visas to some Saudi diplomats.

Reese used this tale, along with our country’s ignorance of the difference between the two countries’ levels of democracy as well as Saudi Arabia’s support for Al Qaeda, to illustrate the antagonism the U.S. shows the Iranian government through sanctions and threats of war or otherwise “regime change”. He contrasted his generally friendly personal contact with Iranian citizens over the years with the U.S. government’s categorization of its people as “subhuman”. What was once a “communist” is now a “terrorist” label for dehumanizing a population and justifying killing them if necessary.

He called the terming (by our government and the media) of Iran’s “nuclear program” – which he pointed out was not a nuclear *weapons* program – “a mythology”, since it required not just a long process of enrichment but also miniaturization to put on the tip of missiles. This is part of a “complicated process”, said Reese, that Iran has not pursued since 2003.

He addressed Israel’s claim, based on the possibility of a nuclear weapons program, of Iran as an “existential threat”. Reese said conversations with Israeli politicians no longer in office revealed that many of them don’t actually believe this, but when the notion is combined with the fact of Iran’s ability of fire missiles with conventional weapons, it preserves for the U.S. and Israel a justification to “flatten” Iran, as he said. “The people in power in (Iran’s capitol) Tehran may be evil”, he added, “but they’re not crazy”, and were not about to do anything to threaten their ability to run the country. Meanwhile, said Reese, Israel also connects Iran to the Palestinian issue,

citing its support for Hamas to reinforce its justification for occupying Palestine.

Reese called the nuclear weapons agreement with Iran a “major breakthrough” which entailed persuasion of Iranian hardliners afraid of what might happen if the U.S. elected a less accommodating president than Obama. While this certainly has happened and Donald Trump has pulled out (a move with “absolutely no justification...legally, morally, politically”, said Reese), the International Atomic Energy Association has confirmed Iran’s compliance with the accord.

Trump has also re-imposed sanctions on Iran, through which the country will try to “hang on”, he said, with possibly separate financial deals with Russia, China and European countries. Reese expressed some optimism about some of these measures succeeding, and noted that Trump had already put some countries – the largest importers of Iranian oil – on an “exempt” list before the sanctions commenced on November 4...which Reese suggested may be “admitting defeat”. Still, Trump has incurred anger from many countries who not only import Iranian oil and who stand to lose economically but are also now skeptical of agreeing to anything of a diplomatic nature with the U.S.

Reese wanted to make it clear that the Iranian government is by no means beyond reproach. As the main authority in a conservative Islamic republic, he said, it engages in religious persecution and human rights violations such as arrests and torture without trial. Government workers are sometimes owed back wages, and its Republican Guard engages in smuggling of goods and skimming those revenues. But addressing the notion of a war with Iran, Reese called himself a “strong anti-interventionist”, and noted that whether from Republicans’ oil interests or Democrats’ human rights concerns, “it’s the same bombs...it’s the same destruction”.

He suggested, also thinking about other places in the region such as in Syria and Yemen, that if we stay away, the people could work out their problems without us. He also noted the irony of U.S. sanctions in strengthening hardliners in a government, which in turn further opens the door to corruption. Reese’s conversations with Iranians suggested to him the economy is the number one issue. That they complain openly and have had street demonstrations indicated that the government is not absolutely totalitarian.

Reese wound down his talk by commenting on U.S. militarism and Middle East foreign policy – which he feels is steeped somewhat in islamophobia. He criticized overspending on weapons at the expense of needed domestic programs. The war in Afghanistan, he said, is the longest in our history...and one that we are losing. He called Yemen a “human catastrophe” that the U.S. could

stop quickly but so far won’t...though he noted that the murder of Khashoggi as well as reports of the war’s effects on the Yemeni people have begun to turn sentiment, in Congress and among American people, against U.S. participation. Recalling receiving a plaque for his anti-Vietnam War actions 50 years ago, Reese updated the event’s relevance with this call-out: “We’re not going to wait another 50 years to oppose the wars in Yemen, and Afghanistan and Syria and Iraq. The U.S. has to get out now.”

*Ron Zucker*

Log on to [www.reeseerlich.com](http://www.reeseerlich.com).

## Peace Action’s Holiday Gift

We are happy to report that at our Holiday Potluck on December 9, PASMOC collected and donated \$275 to the North Valley Community Foundation’s Camp Fire Relief Fund. Thank you to everyone who gave!

## Membership Report

Peace Action of San Mateo County welcomes back these renewing members:

**David Amendola, Mary Beavins, Max Bollock, Jerry Brozell, Lucy Goodier, Helen Hann, Keiko Kim and Mike Caggiano, Cheryl Kozanitas, Alan Matlage, Ron and Eve Visconti**

## Summary of October 14 Meeting

### Shifting Economic and Political Winds

Have you ever wondered whether money is truly made through privatization? And what the long-term political effects might be?

On October 14 Dr. Conn Hallinan, journalist and analyst for Foreign Policy in Focus, gave a talk covering the role of economics in the growth of fascism in Europe entitled “Barbarians at the Gates: A Picture of World Politics and Attitudes.” Conn began by elaborating on how the growth of social democracies after World War II was a way to confront socialism. He noted, however, that many such programs are now disappearing.

In the U.S. in the 1970’s, President Carter called the U.S. economic situation a “national malaise.” With debt rising due to the Vietnam war, the philosophy here and in other countries, said Conn, became “tax cuts equals wealth.” In Britain, where tax cuts helped grow the debt and globalization sent jobs to faraway countries, the Labor Party-led government also moved away from social spending and lost support; the resulting unrest led to the rise of Margaret Thatcher. For similar reasons, Ronald Reagan became President, and the free-market capital-

ism pushed by both leaders, said Conn, was marked by the Reagan phrase "Government is not the solution, government is the problem". Thus began a period of tax cuts and deregulation in the U.S., and a selloff of public institutions and industries to the private sector. (Conn cited a deadly apartment complex fire in Britain as an example of the resulting mismanagement by the private sector.)

In other European center-left countries, he said, the same philosophies of tax cuts, the free market and free trade became accepted as creators of wealth. But he added that economic inequality has, since Thatcher arrived, "become greater than it was during the Gilded Age", and cited that "the top 20 % of the world's population controls 94.5% of the world's wealth." He called such figures "simply not sustainable". The combination of globalism and a lack of investment by corporations benefiting from this system have led to impoverishment and declining living standards of industrial and rural centers all over the world, and "has laid the ground for things like Brexit and Donald Trump," he added.

The new globalization created cheap goods but also incredible wealth, and – with the help of government tax breaks and regulation waivers – "all that massive amount of capital", he said, "went looking for profits." What it found was speculation of debts, real estate and other targets in a bubble that would soon burst. In Southeast Asia this led to an economic crisis in the late 1990s, and when the region collapsed, the next stop for speculation was the U.S., where the subprime loan crisis led to the 2008 economic collapse here and in Europe. Conn called it "a giant ponzi scheme."

The resulting political crisis here and in Europe is a result of what he said "was prescribed to recover...austerity, regressive taxes, deregulation, and yet more privatization". Imposed by financial authorities in the European Union, the effect on people and the government is more debt, thus no investment. "The pattern is circular", Conn added. The benefits went to corporations who could afford to take on once-public assets, and speculators who were bailed out by tax money. Profits were privatized and losses – including bailouts – were socialized. Aside from an executive in Iceland, no one was penalized. Banks who made bailout loans lost virtually nothing and profited greatly.

Conn pointed out that European center-left and socialist parties' acceptance of neo-liberalism made them indistinguishable from center-right parties. Now they are losing political support, though one exception is Portugal, where an alliance of the center-left and two left-wing parties agreed to roll back austerity and introduce mild stimulus measures – allowing the economy to grow. Similarly, the leftist Labor Party in Britain reclaimed the majority in a snap election when they promised an increase in popular benefits including national health,

school lunch programs and minimum wage hikes. Conn surmised they may be leading the government in a couple of years – a possible result of resisting the Reagan/Thatcher model of neoliberal capitalism.

Conn addressed European right-wing movements, citing Italy's "5-Star" Movement's example of blaming immigrants and pushing for a universal income only for certain (white) ethnicities. This position prevailed over the center-left party's questionable policies of encouraging youth to emigrate to find jobs and bringing in "gig" economy elements such as Uber and Lyft; the right made huge electoral gains. They also did so by calling for economic "sovereignty", or more control of its currency.

Calling the European Right "quite dangerous," Conn also cited policies by the Alternative for Germany party that advocate for, among other things, celebrating the *weermacht*, or the Nazi army. He mentioned Austria's Freedom Party, started by former leaders of the Nazi secret police. And he mentioned Italy, where Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini, also head of the right-wing Northern League, has called for breaking North Italy away from the South, and accusing people like Jewish billionaire George Soros of trying to benefit from the country's economic problems. "Scratch these people", said Conn of Salvini, "and the little swastika and anti-semitism comes right to the surface." He pointed out a paradox, for countries such as Italy, Germany, and the U.S. where anti-immigrant sentiment is rampant, in which the population replacement rate is low enough to cripple their economies were the immigrant populations expelled – for which some in these countries have advo-

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cated.

Conn asserted that “the crisis in capitalism is world-wide...the central ingredient is a growth of inequality.” There is a class of the super-rich, he said, that have no stake in society, because, for instance, their children don’t attend public schools, they don’t use public transportation, and they don’t need Social Security. These people also buy election results to “jam up the government” he said, to the point where people question the nature of democracy. Conn cited a “dangerous feedback loop” in which people don’t have the money to spend on a real economy; when an economy becomes stagnant, capital turns to speculation, which creates bubbles. As he noted earlier in his talk, “Bubbles pop, and...we’re headed that way...once again.”

He noted his earlier examples of Portugal and Britain, where supportive economic policies are leading to progress on the political front. He mentioned a “democracy deficit” that can only be fixed if European nations have more control over their economies. On this order he also endorsed at least partly repaying the debts of European Union nations as was done for Germany – now the world’s fourth largest economy – following World War II.

“If you make people’s lives miserable, they vote for the charlatans with the easy answers”, he said. “If you do well by them, they may go a good deal further than you might think”.

*Ron Zucker and Darlene Silva*

## Weekly Peace Vigils

Come join members and friends of PASMCM “at the corner” as we call for peace and justice every Saturday afternoon. That’s from 3-4 PM in front of the Bank of America building, 3rd Avenue and El Camino Real in San Mateo. Bring a sign or hold one of ours!

And on Thursdays from 4-6 PM, you can stand with the “Stand for Peace”, with Declaration of Peace-San Mateo, at 4th Avenue and El Camino.

# National

## North Korea Just Gave a Clue on How to End its Nuclear Program; We Should Listen

*By Harry J. Kazanis, opinion contributor for The Hill, 12/22/18*

While the pundits in Washington debate the Trump administration’s decision to remove U.S. forces from Syria, another global hotspot, North Korea, is back in the news – and not in a good way. That is, if you listen to

the media hype and take every word coming out of Pyongyang as always directed at the United States.

The latest North Korea drama driving headlines comes courtesy of a recent commentary carried by the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), North Korea’s news propaganda outlet. It seems the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) is quite upset over America’s lack of understanding involving the term “denuclearization.” The article points out – and I hate to say, quite correctly – that the Trump administration has twisted the meaning that just North Korea is to “denuclearize.”

That’s just not so, and the North is eager to point this out. The joint statement signed by President Donald Trump and Chairman Kim Jong Un at their summit in Singapore explicitly states the North agreed “to work toward complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.”

That nuanced language matters. It means Pyongyang also is looking for nuclear security from the United States – and not just the other way around. In fact, the author of the KCNA commentary shows how North Korea defines the exact geography of the Korean Peninsula, and what denuclearization means to them.

“When we refer to the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula,” explained the KCNA article, that “means removing all elements of nuclear threats from the areas of both the north and the south of Korea and also from surrounding areas from where the Korean peninsula is targeted.”

What North Korea wants is simple: a guarantee that U.S. forces won’t deploy nuclear-capable assets in or around its territory – bombers, submarines and maybe even aircraft carriers. That is something the North has been demanding for years. “It is a self-evident truth that the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula is a joint work,” explains KCNA, “which can never come true unless the DPRK and the U.S. make joint efforts.”

It seems North Korea is simply reminding us what we signed up for. But headlines around the world are interpreting the above inaccurately – and that could drive up tensions. Perhaps the best example of all comes from The Independent, stating that “(N)orth Korea has said it will not give up its nuclear weapons until the U.S. first ‘completely eliminates’ its own arsenal in the region, a bombshell demand that threatens to derail peace talks.”

Now, to be entirely fair, if you ask 10 North Korea-watchers to interpret anything the hermit kingdom says you are likely to get 10 very different points of analysis. However, do yourself a favor: read (the December 20) statement for yourself and decide.

So, where is this misinterpretation coming from? What seems to be driving some of the commentary that Wash-

ington must “give up” its nuclear weapons is a part of the KCNA statement that states “the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula means ‘completely removing the nuclear threats from the U.S. to the DPRK’ before it means the elimination of its nuclear deterrence.”

The challenge is that the wording above can be interpreted any way you wish. I read that statement and came away wanting more information, wondering if something was lost in translation. You could also read it as the North wants an end to verbal threats – not the actual dismantling of America’s nuclear weapons, something we would never do anyway.

In any case, the North took a calculated risk putting out such a statement, knowing President Trump would read it or see it on the news and could decide to act – and that could mean anything from another “fire and fury” threat to who knows what else.

The Trump administration must decide what it is willing to offer to create the conditions under which North Korea would give up its nuclear weapons and, ultimately, to get Kim to follow through with it. That means creating an atmosphere in which the North feels safe that it can surrender its nukes and won’t end up like Iraq or Afghanistan – something they have stated they fear on numerous occasions. This means, of course, diplomatic relations and a formal end to the Korean War, followed by a mutually agreed-upon set of reciprocal confidence-building actions, such as the easing of sanctions for certain steps that enhance the security of Washington, Pyongyang and Seoul.

But before any of that can happen, Washington needs to change its expectations. Demanding that the North give up its nuclear weapons before the Kim regime gains any benefits is a surefire way to return to the nuclear threats of last year. And that is something we need to avoid at all costs.

*Harry J. Kazianis serves as director of defense studies at the Center for the National Interest, a nonpartisan policy group in Washington, D.C.*

## **Veterans For Peace Statement on Trump Plan to Deport Southeast Asian War Refugees**

President Donald Trump’s administration has announced a plan to deport Vietnamese, Laotian and Cambodian war refugees who came to the United States after our disastrous war in their nations over four decades ago. Veterans For Peace denounces this plan as a dishonorable betrayal of former allies in war and a racially-motivated attack on minority communities.

In the 1950’s, ‘60’s, and ‘70’s, the United States violated internationally-agreed upon peace treaties, international law, and moral conduct by intervening to prevent an in-

ternationally-supervised free election to form a government in Viet Nam after the French colonialists left. The United States illegally divided Viet Nam in half, declared the southern half a new country called “South Vietnam,” and formed, financed, and armed a government there. Some Vietnamese in the south, believing in the U.S., supported that government. They joined the fight against Vietnamese who resisted the American intervention, thus creating what we refer to as the “Vietnam War” (Viet Nam today calls it the “American War”). Due to massive popular resistance both in Viet Nam and in America, the U.S. and U.S.-formed government in the south lost the war, and thousands of Vietnamese who had supported the American side in the war fled to the U.S. The American war in Viet Nam spilled over to neighboring countries, including Laos and Cambodia, resulting in similar waves of refugees fleeing after the American war. America welcomed them, and they settled here. These communities have worked hard, established themselves, proven their loyalty to America, and demonstrated a high level of achievement and a low crime rate. They are some of our most productive residents and deserve our nation’s support and loyalty in return.

The Trump administration claims they are deporting criminals, but administration behavior with Latino and other groups show they are deporting everyone. And all people, even criminals, have rights that law, social order, and morals require to be respected.

Veterans For Peace stands firmly in support of the Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian communities, and are directly opposed to the Trump administration’s plan to deport them. We will work with these communities and other allies to support them against this deportation plan, and offer aid as we can.

[www.veteransforpeace.org](http://www.veteransforpeace.org)

## **Predictions...Considering**

It looks like we’ll be having Rush Limbaugh for Secretary of Defense, Ann Coulter in the State Department and Tucker Carlson at the “Space Command” headquarters as newly created. All this as we all sing a new national anthem to the Dear Leader Donald Trumpelberger. Do you seem surprised? Well, it’s all possible in our very near future.

The only political party permitted will be the “Republic Which Used To Stand” Party headed by the Dear Leader. All treaties and trade agreements will be considered null and void and shall likewise be reconstituted by the same Dear Leader.

We will have the “small government” that has been so often desired by leading political writers. Super cheap to

operate. Just check your inbox for the twitter feed addressed to you and comply. Got it?

Oh and have a happy new year. Now you can wake up! And so much for my satire (hopefully).

*Mike Caggiano*

## Donald Trump wins “Golden Idiot” Award – Fourth Year in a Row

*Tana Ganeva Raw Story December 17, 2018*

President Donald Trump is famously thin-skinned, and prone to attack both reporters and entire networks, like CNN, over what he sees as unfair coverage of his administration.

That hasn't stopped a German satire program from naming Trump the “golden idiot” for the fourth year in a row.

Germany's Heute-Show, presented by comedian and journalist Oliver Welke on the ZDF network, has bequeathed the odd honor on the President of the United States once again this year.

In 2018, Trump shares the prize with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, North Korean supreme leader Kim Jong Un and the whole United Kingdom, among others, reports Newsweek.

## Action Alert

### Save the INF Treaty

To the chagrin of just about every arms control advocate, Donald Trump announced in October that he would pull the U.S. out of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, negotiated with the then-Soviet Union in 1987 and entered into force in 1988.

Jackie Cabasso of Western States Legal Foundation supplied an effective summary of the treaty and its importance:

“The INF Treaty is a key element of the arms control framework limiting nuclear weapons and arms racing...it prohibits (the U.S. and Russia) from deploying both nuclear and conventional missiles with ranges between 500 and 5500 km (310 and 3420 miles). Often forward deployed and intermingled with other forces, these are among the weapons most likely to lead to miscalculation or misadventure in a crisis.

“U.S. withdrawal from the INF Treaty is another sign of deepening crisis among the nuclear-armed states. It imperils the entire structure of arms control and disarmament and could lead to new and unpredictable rounds of arms racing.

“Both the U.S. and Russia accuse each other of violating the INF Treaty. Wherever the truth lies, the solution is

not to pull out of the Treaty, but to redouble diplomatic efforts to resolve the allegations.” Indeed, Russia has already talked about building up its nuclear arsenal to a dangerous level should the U.S. abandon the treaty. In addition, China's nuclear missiles of a similar size as those covered in the treaty are not addressed and could become an issue.

In late November Congress weighed in, when six senators introduced S.3667, the Prevention of Arms Race Act of 2018. The bill declares a sense of the Senate that “President Trump's announcement of the intent of the United States to withdraw from the INF Treaty...is a serious breach of Congress's proper constitutional role as a co-equal branch of government.” The bill goes on to create significant barriers to spending on deployment of missiles that would violate the treaty, while also mandating the need to examine issues related to breaches of it. California Senator Dianne Feinstein has co-sponsored the bill; Kamala Harris has not yet.

**Action:** Contact Sen. Harris and urge her support for S.3667, as well as any new version that comes along in 2019. Suggest that Congress needs to play a visible role (to the world as well as to the nation) in keeping the world's superpowers' nuclear arsenals under control – until the day they are finally abolished. We can also thank Sen. Feinstein for giving the bill her co-sponsorship.

### In Search of a Practical Military Pullout

On December 19, when Donald Trump tweeted he was pulling U.S. troops out of Syria, the move was met with a variety of reactions. The Peace Action national office said as part of a press statement, “President Trump is absolutely right to withdraw U.S. forces from Syria. President Obama deployed U.S. soldiers to Syria in violation of international law, and the ongoing U.S. presence there only serves to prolong the war and fuel the risk of confrontation with Russia, Iran, and other parties to the conflict.” Others in the peace activist community and some in Congress noted that this was yet another U.S. mission not authorized by Congress, and with no present clear mission or strategy.

But many others in Congress – and some on the left – have criticized Trump (and two Administration officials have quit) over what they consider a hasty move that will serve to abandon the Kurds, who have played a major role in turning back ISIS in its drive to dominate the region. If they are left without a U.S. force to back them, a Turkish government army bent on launching an assault on the Kurds will have its way. Indeed, there are reports that Trump's decision to get out of Syria followed a conversation with Turkey's President Erdoğan, in which the latter convinced Trump the U.S. was no longer needed in the fight against ISIS.

Thus Trump's ham-fisted move to pull our troops out of another military quagmire could lead to another human rights disaster for which we would bear some responsibility. Clearly a diplomatic initiative to protect the Kurds in Syria and Turkey is needed, and the U.S. should be at the forefront. Furthermore, the pullout actually leaves U.S. bombing missions around the region in place, doing our part to continue putting civilian lives in danger. The Congressional leaders and others who are criticizing Trump need to see a bigger picture that depicts protecting populations as well as Congressional participation in decisions to go to war.

**Action:** Contact Rep. Nancy Pelosi, in her new capacity as Speaker of the House, as well as Rep. Jackie Speier or Anna Eshoo or whomever represents you, and tell them to ask why the U.S. military continues to drop bombs on Syria and Afghanistan without Congressional authorization. Add that while it is necessary to protect the Kurds in Syria, they and our military should push for a solution involving diplomacy, rather than a military occupation. Contact Sens. Feinstein and Harris with the same message of finding peaceful solutions to conflicts on that side of the world – and for Congressional ownership of U.S. military action.

## H.R. 1 – Starting Off Right

When the new Congress is sworn in early January, the first bill the Democratic majority will introduce, we hear, will be a comprehensive package of reforms focusing on good government toward achieving a proper democracy. H.R. 1 will focus on a number of areas, including restoring the Voting Rights Act (vital parts of which were struck down in 2013), facilitating more public financing of elections, ending partisan gerrymandering of electoral districts, and closing the government-to-business revolving door that keeps Congress beholden to corporate interests rather than to its constituents.

The last H.R.1 in the Republican-led House of Representatives focused on massive tax cuts geared to the richest folks in the U.S. population. The soon-to-be majority party has expressed a desire to begin a new direction, calling for more equality in our ability to vote and to run government. Of course they – and everyone in the new House – will be hearing plenty from wealthy corporate interests and big-money donors (often the same people) in an effort to either water down or abandon altogether such a bill that would promote voting and other reforms that benefit the whole population.

That is where we come in. Elected representatives are waiting to hear what their district's voters have to say; the idea then is to let them know what we want and don't want in our voting system. Free access to polls, public matching of small-donor contributions, automatic voter registration and an end to secret large "dark-money" contributions from unknown wealthy interests can be

just a few more items on the wish list. The more people ask for, the more that we want to see will be in H.R.1 in 2019.

**Action:** Contact Rep. Speier or Eshoo, or whomever represents you, and tell them what you want to see in the new H.R.1. This could include strong voter access, severely-imposed limits to contributions in electoral campaigns (perhaps even empowering the Federal Election Commission to truly enforce campaign finance law), and an end to the "revolving door" of business interests exchanging jobs with government decision-makers. The more we ask for, the better chance we have at a fair election system and fair government.

*Ron Zucker*

## Directory

**Capitol Switchboard: 202-224-3121**

### **Senator Dianne Feinstein**

One Post St., Ste 2450 San Francisco, CA 94104  
(202) 224-3841 fax: (202) 228-3954  
(415) 393-0707 fax (415)393-0710

### **Senator Kamala Harris**

333 Bush Street, Ste. 3225 San Francisco, CA 94104  
(202) 224-3553 fax: (202) 224-2200  
(415) 981-9369 fax: (202) 224-0454

### **Representative Jackie Speier**

155 Bovet Rd., Ste 780 San Mateo, CA 94402  
(202) 225-3531 fax: (202) 226-4183  
(650) 342-0300 (650) 375-8270

### **Representative Anna Eshoo**

698 Emerson Street Palo Alto, CA 94301  
(202) 225-8104 fax: (202) 225-8890  
(650) 323-2984 (650) 323-3498

### **Rep. Nancy Pelosi - Speaker of the House (as of 1/3/19)**

(202)225-4965 (415)556-4862

### **Donald Trump**

The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20500  
(202)456-1111: fax: (202)456-2461  
[www.whitehouse.gov/contact/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/)

**Find out who your Representative is:** [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov)

**If you are not in California, identify your senators**

**here:** [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov)

The **Update** is published quarterly by Peace Action of San Mateo County. We welcome all submissions and letters, and reserve the right to exclude or edit for content and other considerations. The views expressed within are not necessarily those of the members of Peace Action of San Mateo County or Peace Action.



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***Peace vigil every Saturday***

We will be at 3rd Ave. and El Camino Real in San Mateo at 3 PM for our weekly antiwar vigil, while our military presence in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan continues.

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Peace Action of San Mateo County  
Presents a talk by  
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***Inducing Chaos:***

***The foundational design of the  
"forever war" - and what we can do  
to stop it.***

Sunday, January 13, 7 PM

Unitarian Universalists of San Mateo  
300 E. Santa Inez Avenue, San Mateo  
Admission free, contributions welcome

The UUSM is wheelchair accessible

Details inside!