Merrimack Valley
People For Peace
Serving the communities of the Merrimack Valley

Merrimack Valley People for Peace, Inc. works for a sustainable future for all life on our planet. Our members commit themselves to the interrelated activities of education for peace and justice, the prevention of war, an end to arms sales, the abolition of nuclear weapons, and protection of the environment.

July 2025 – June 2026

GOOD NEWS

South Carolina Senate rejects congressional map redraw. In South Carolina, the state Senate wrapped up its session on May 27 without voting on a new congressional map that would have dismantled the state's only majority-Black district. They quietly defied pressure from the president and the GOP to join the ongoing redistricting battle ahead of the midterm elections.
Sources: multiple news outlets

Slush fund slashed after backlash. The Justice Department has canceled plans to create a $1.8 (1.776) billion "anti-weaponization fund" that critics feared would have gone to loyalists of President Donald Trump.

On June 2, Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche testified that the DOJ would not move forward with plans for the fund, which was intended to compensate people who claimed to have been targeted by the "weaponization" of President Joe Biden's government. Backlash from some Republicans threatened to weaken the party's advantages. They and Democrats were concerned that it would serve as a "slush fund" for Trump's allies and supporters, including those who participated in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol.

Legal experts also said the fund lacked a clear legal basis, with no judicial review or congressional oversight. Blanche said they still plan to protect the president from investigations.
AP, Time Magazine

House votes to rein in Trump on Iran war, in a bipartisan rebuke. The House of Representatives has approved legislation seeking to end President Trump's war on Iran. On June 3, four Republican congress members broke ranks and sided with Democrats in a vote of **215-208** on a war powers resolution directing President Trump to remove U.S. armed forces from hostilities against Iran unless explicitly authorized by Congress. It adds to the pressure on the White House to find an end to the Iran War; as petrol prices have spiked and public opposition to the war has increased.
multiple U.S. and foreign media outlets

If reading a paper copy, you can follow underlined links on the online copy at: https://merrimackvalleypeopleforpeace.org/NewsJy25-ju26.pdf

Stephen Colbert launches YouTube channel right after the final Late Night Show episode. After his last appearance on CBS as host of The Late Show, May 20, Stephen Colbert continued his television hosting on a public access show in Michigan The debute, over Monroe Community Media, that weekend, was a single video titled: *"Only In Monroe --- May 22, 2026."*

Monroe, Michigan has a population of roughly 20,000. The new YouTube channel has garnered more than 120,000 subscribers.

In the video, the comedian joked: "It's been an excruciating 23 hours without being on TV, so I am grateful to be able to be here on Monroe Community Media before they also get acquired by Paramount,."
The Guardian

Protests swell against planned ICE detention centers. The Trump administration's plans to add at least 24 new facilities have triggered furious pushback in communities nationwide. Protests against existing and planned detention facilities have been held in, Burlington MA, Merrimack NH, Chester NY, Roxbury NJ, Hagerstown MD, Moshannon Valley PA, Ashland VA, Richmond VA, Conyers GA, Social Circle GA, Marietta GA, Hutchins TX, Socorro TX , Dilley TX, Durant OK, Oklahoma City OK, Kansas City MO, McHenry IL, Las Cruces NM, Salt Lake City UT, and others.

Some of the sites the agency is scouting are warehouses previously designed for e-commerce retailers. Of the already purchased warehouses that ICE planned to use for large scale detention space, none is functioning.

They have drawn significant pushback not only from outraged citizens, but also from elected officials who have stopped some purchase plans.

Legal challenges have stopped others. An environmental policy focused lawsuit is halting work in Hagerstown, Maryland. A potential multi-thousand-bed warehouse facility in Surprise, Arizona had a "stop work order" issued on its renovation project just days before.

In February, following a robust grassroots campaign joined by town officials, then by the New Hampshire congressional delegation and finally by Republican Governor Kelly Ayotte, DHS, decided not to move forward with the proposed ICE facility in nearby Merrimack, NH.

At Social Circle GA, City Manager Eric Taylor shut off the water to the warehouse, and declared that "the lock stays there …until we had a better understanding of what the impact was going to be on our water." In mid-May the town had filed for a federal lawsuit opposing the detention facility. Other than the concerns about water and sewer system problems, the complaint asserted that locating what ICE has called a "megacenter" in the small town of about 5,000 residents would violate Georgia's "public nuisance" law – meaning it would "harm their health, safety, and wellbeing". Legal experts said that this federal lawsuit has the potential to create a wide impact, as it uses novel legal arguments.

And New Jersey's attorney general on June 2 filed a lawsuit against the private prison company GEO Group operating the ICE jail known as Delaney Hall. The lawsuit alleges GEO Group violated state law by blocking inspectors from the facility's medical unit, sleeping quarters and bathing areas during a visit the previous week. This came as hundreds of immigrants detained at the ICE jail were continuing their hunger and labor strikes.
MN NOW, The Guardian, BBC, Democracy Now!

10,000 rulings: The courts' overwhelming rebuke of Trump's ICE policies. A POLITICO analysis reveals judges have ruled against ICE detention practices in roughly 90 percent of cases since the agency mandated that millions of immigrants must be locked up while they face deportation proceedings.

More than 10,000 times, judges have said those detentions, typically carried out with no opportunity for detainees to plead their case, were illegal. — a staggering rejection of a core piece of Trump's immigration agenda.

Cases include a nursing mother who was detained despite active refugee status and another mother separated from her one-year-old child and released from custody only when her son landed in the hospital. Cases include parents of U.S. military service members, trafficking victims or witnesses, and a 5-year-old boy detained by ICE on his way home from school.

"This isn't how things are supposed to work in America," wrote U.S. District Judge Gary Brown, a Trump appointee based in New York, in the case of a man whose lawful status was revoked after ICE arrested him. "Unquestionably, the laws of human decency condemn such villainy."
Politico

New York Federal judge bans ICE arrests at Manhattan immigration courts. A federal judge in New York has banned ICE agents from arresting immigrants in or around three federal courthouses in lower Manhattan. Under the order issued by US district judge Kevin Castell, federal agents are no longer allowed to make arrests of immigrants except under exceptional circumstances at the sites where hearings are held before immigration judges.

The ruling came in response to a lawsuit brought by the New York Civil Liberties Union, the American Civil Liberties Union, Make the Road NY, and other groups.
NBC News, ABC News, The Boston Globe, The Guardian

Democratic district attorneys vow to prosecute federal agents who target voting sites. A nationwide coalition of Democrat district attorneys and prosecutors has vowed to prosecute any federal agent suspected of intimidating voters. "A federal badge is not a license to violate the Constitution, and it is not a shield from state criminal law," said Larry Krasner, district attorney of Philadelphia. "We will prosecute ICE agents who break the law. There is no category of American who gets to operate above it."

Members of the coalition, which calls itself the Project for the Fight Against Federal Overreach, warned the administration that any federal agents sent to polling places within their jurisdictions will be prosecuted.
Politico, MS NOW

Federal prosecutors drop all charges against the "Broadview Six". In late May, federal prosecutors in Chicago have dismissed all charges against the four remaining members of the so-called "Broadview Six," a group of protesters who were arrested outside the ICE facility in Broadview last fall. They were later indicted for conspiracy to impede a federal agent, despite many not having met prior to appearing together in court. "I didn't find out that I had been indicted until a month after this happened," says Kat Abughazaleh, who was not arrested at the protest, but weeks later, as she was running for Congress.

Defense attorneys said prosecutors were forced to drop the case because of "significant errors" in the grand jury process. A trial that had been scheduled to begin next week was canceled, after prosecutors agreed to dismiss the charges with prejudice, meaning they cannot be refiled.
Capitol News Illinois, The Guardian, Democracy Now!, CBS News

Federal Judge in Tennessee dismisses all criminal charges against Kilmar Abrego Garcia, the Maryland father of three who was wrongfully sent to El Salvador's notorious CECOT mega-prison last year. After Abrego Garcia won his deportation case, the Justice Department attempted to bring human smuggling charges against him, stemming from a 2022 traffic stop in Tennessee. But on May 26, U.S. District Judge Waverly Crenshaw ruled that actions taken by then-Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche had "tainted" the investigation with a "vindictive motive". Judge Crenshaw added: "The evidence before this Court sadly reflects an abuse of prosecuting power."
Democracy Now!

The grid is in better shape this summer thanks to solar energy and batteries. We expect another abnormally hot summer, but the U.S. grid appears to be in decent shape to handle the heat thanks to a rapid expansion of solar generation and energy storage. This is the conclusion of the new summer reliability assessment from the North American Electric Reliability Corp.(NERC), which oversees the U.S. and Canadian electric systems.

"Record resource additions have strengthened readiness for the summer season," NERC highlighted, including "a substantial influx of solar and battery" resources , the most prevalent and lowest-cost new sources of grid power (18% of this growth is new natural gas-fired generators.") The report contradicts the Trump administration's claims that aging classic fossil-fueled plants are needed in order to prevent blackouts.
Mother Jones, Canary Media

Meeting Notes/Events

June 24, 2025
We planned for summer outreach events:
-Many peace activist groups will hold a joint NO WAR WITH IRAN Rally at the JFK Federal Building, Boston on Thursday, June 26 at 12pm**.**
-Lowell Folk Festival on July 26, 2024. Kathie, Brian, Boryana, Phil, Janice & Allan and Ruth plan to be at the table.
-The Hiroshima Vigil in front of the Old Town Hall in Andover on August 6.. Boryana Tacconi will clear it with Town of Andover.
-Bread & Roses festival on Labor Day September 1, Brian will register.

Brian, Boryana, Masood (and his daughter and son-in-law) attended the MAPA rally against the War on Iran in Boston on June 22.

Many MVPP members attended the NO KINGS rallies held in Boston, Andover, and North Andover on June 14.

We asked Boryana to send a note of thanks to Barbara Haack for hosting MVPP's Annual meeting.

July 22, 2025
We finalized the planning for tabling at Lowell Folkfest, Saturday July 26. Brian and Boryana will set up around 8 a.m. to keep space for MVPP and MAPA. Planning to join in the afternoon were : Kathie, Ruth, Janice and Allan, Tom and Rebecca.

Andover: We confirmed Wednesday August 6, for the Vigil to commemorate Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Town Management has approved the space in front of Old Town Hall. Kathie will do the press release. It is important to have signs saying 80 YEARS.

MVPP has also signed on as supporter to the Boston event organized by a coalition of Boston area peace, justice and environmental organizations (MAPA, Campaign for Peace, Disarmament and Common Security, the AFSC, Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility, September 11 Families for Peaceful Tomorrows and many others.)

The Bread and Roses Festival in Lawrence, is Labor Day, Monday September 1. Brian is working on getting MVPP in.

Everyone has been to several protests and demonstrations. Ruth told us about the protests in Chelmsford.

Ruth also let us know that Pope Leo has been very strongly speaking for peace.

AUGUST 2025
We did some last planning for the Bread and Roses Festival in Lawrence. Janice and Allan will come to Brian's house with the truck at 10 am and load up the canopy, tables and chairs. Boryana will bring everything that we put on the tables. Brian, Kathie, Janice and Allan, Ruth, Carolyn and Boryana are planning to be at the festival and take turns at the table. Phil make sure that we have copies of the last issue of Peace and Planet (the Veterans for Peace quarterly) on the table.

September 23, 2025
September 26 is the UN's International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. Ruth will send out the information about a Boston event.

The next No Kings protest is planned for October.18 We all plan to go.

Annual Stone Soup gathering in November: Could we do it at Barbara Haack's again? We will keep our eyes open for local speakers about turning around sliding into autocracy.

We will mark Keep Space for Peace Week at the Raytheon vigil on October 9.

Recent events: The Bread and Roses Festival at Lawrence was smaller this year, partly due to Boston's First Labor Day Parade which took place at the same time; so MAPA and other groups that usually have a table at Bread and Roses were participating at the parade. Also, Bread and Puppets didn't come this year - a disappointment to us all. We had some good conversations at the table and enjoyed great weather.

Masood was at two protests in Boston, one organized by Jewish Voice for Peace and one by Doctors Against Genocide. Carolyn reported on the protests at the ICE facility in Burlington.

Boryana reported a new protest in Lawrence, at the bridge near the New Balance outlet, in support of immigrants, held every Thursday from 5pm to 6pm (Now 4 to 5).

At the end of the meeting we had a free conversation about the situation in the country, expected problems with vaccines, the unwillingness of the Democratic Party to change, and much more.

October 28, 2025
We planned for the annual Stone Soup gathering. Barbara Haack graciously offered to host it again this year, at her home on Saturday, November 22nd, noon. She tried to get speakers, but all were busy.

Kathie Robinson reminded us to schedule the MVPP committee for donations to other groups (Kathie , Brian, and Masood), to meet before the end of the year.

We voted to set up Town Hall meetings with State Senators and Representatives regarding the activities of ICE.

We shared impressions of the No Kings protest on October 18. Everyone had participated in it at one or more locations.

Brian Quirk and Carolyn Whiting participated in holding signs at an overpass, organized by Indivisible.

During the Keep Space for Peace week we held appropriate signs at both the Raytheon and the Shawsheen corner vigils.

The meeting ended with a free discussion about the situation in the country and in the world.

November 22, Stone Soup Gathering
We had a pleasant meal, saw some wild and domestic animals, and had an adventure with the stone. Boryana had provided the stone from a supply Arthur Brien had used to hold down papers at our table. At the end of the day she couldn’t find it. Fears of broken teeth arose, but Phil, later at home, found it in his leftovers.

No meeting in December

January 26, 2026
The attendees expressed their rage and sorrow at the cruel murder of peaceful protesters by ICE, and requested all to contact their Representatives and Senator to urge them to stop funding for ICE.

The attendees appreciated the courage and perseverance of the protesters in Minneapolis -a font of inspiration and hope for all. Their protests may be providing some backbone for Democrats and a few Republicans to confront Trump’s authoritarianism.

Barbara Haack and Carolyn Whiting reported on-going weekly peace vigil in Newburyport and protests against ICE in Burlington.

Many of us signed individually a petition to award the Nobel Peace Prize to the people of Minneapolis for their peaceful resistance to ICE.

Boryana and Brian joined No ICE standouts in Lawrence, at the Duck Bridge, Thursdays at 4.

The attendees expressed sorrow for recent passing away of Michael Bleiweiss, a long-time member of MVPP. All remembered him as a kind person.

Bobbie Goldman had a major surgery recently. Carolyn Whiting will send her get-well card on behalf of MVPP.

March 25, 2026
Donations approved by the Donations Committee have been disbursed to other groups.

Today's jury verdict finding that Meta and YouTube have been designed to be addictive, that harmed young people, was greeted with satisfaction and hope.

No Kings protests will be held on Saturday March28, in Andover, Boston, and many nearby towns.

There was no discussion as the attendees seemed to be in a somber mood due to the war on Iran and current domestic and global chaos.

April 28, 2026
CD6 Representative, Seth Moulton, solicited input from his constituents for his questioning of Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Dan Caine when they testify in front of the House Armed Services Committee on April 29, 2026.

May Day Strong will hold nationwide rallies on Saturday, May 1, 2026. The attendees plan to join local rallies.

Brian Quirk will participate in "The Walk for Hunger" on Sunday, May 3, 2026. to raise money for hunger relief in Massachusetts.

Tentative dates and venues for MVPP's annual meeting were discussed. June 13, 2026 (Saturday at noon) has been proposed, with TBD venue

The attendees paid compliments to Janice and Alan Sifferlen for preparing a great sign for our Thursday and Sunday peace vigils.

May 26, 2026
MVPP's annual meeting will be held at noon on June 13, 2026 (Saturday) at Barbara Haack's residence. It will be a pot-luck social gathering.

MVPP is planning to participate in the Lowell Folk Festival on Saturday, July 25, 2026. Boryana Tacconi is submitting the required paperwork. Boryana and Brian Quirk plan to camp out early in the morning to ensure a spot for MVPP table. The people who plan to attend will be informed of cancellation case of inclement weather.

MVPP will hold a memorial on the 81st anniversary of Hiroshima, August 6, 2026, at 6:00 pm in front of Old Town Hall in Andover.

Brian Quirk had attended Veterans for Peace gathering on the Memorial Day at the Boston Commons.

In Memory

We lost two active members this year.

Michael Bleiweiss

Michael sent a reply to the invitation to the November Stone Soup Supper that he couldn't attend because he was in the hospital.

Turned out, he was at Boston Medical Center Brighton (the former St. Elizabeth's) in their ICU, with pneumonia and other problems. He died December 6.

Michael was an enthusiastic MVPP member for at least 20 years. He was well read, a thinker, and he wrote so many letters to the editor, that our web page pointed to his, to keep readers up to date. He contributed at meetings, and sometimes gently challenged where we were going. He knew when to add a corny joke.

He often sat at our tables until he got involved with a similar cause – to overrule Citizens United, where the Supreme Court said money was protected as free speech, so giant corporate donations could sponsor politicians. Then he would be at his own table for that cause, We the People.

He attended four No Kings marches before he was bedridden.

Michael played (in spite of arthritis) and wrote for the flute. Recordings are at his website at https://www.facebook.com/MichaelBleiweissMusic/0

We also miss him as a friend.
Brian Quirk

Jane Cadarette, Peace Activist Remembered

I met Jane in 1983 or 1984. I believe she was a member of the Greater Lawrence Ecumenical Freeze Group, a group of anti-nuclear activists from various Christian churches in the greater Lawrence area that was organized by Rev. Jim Keller to promote a nuclear freeze, where the US and Soviet Union would freeze the size of their nuclear arsenals. The group met in Lawrence and included long-time MVPP members Arthur Brien, Dick McCarthy, and me. In 1984, Jim Keller moved his ministry and the Freeze Group disbanded.

At the same time, the North Andover People for Peace was being organized at the North Parish Unitarian Church in North Andover. I believe Arthur, Dick, Jane, and I all joined immediately and jumped into the effort to incorporate the group and apply for 501(c)(3) status. Jane became one of the founding officers.

Jane, like many of us, was deeply inspired by Dr. Helen Caldicott. Dr. Caldicott believed nuclear weapons and the US-Soviet strategy of mutually assured destruction presented an existential threat to all humanity. Jane also feared nuclear power and the potential release of radiation from Seabrook nuclear power plant. She kept potassium iodide pills to counteract radiation sickness in her home.

Jane was also a devout Catholic who believed in the sanctity of humanity and all creation. Her faith in God's good creation and her fear that arrogant and ignorant humans could destroy it in seconds with nuclear weapons motivated her towards grassroots education of her fellow citizens through North Andover People for Peace, later Merrimack Valley People for Peace, as well as other organizations. Her role was to spread the message that humans and their faith leaders needed to wake up and address nuclear weapons/nuclear power before a catastrophe.

This she did with almost boundless energy, optimism, and gentle humor.

One of the most powerful educational tools she discovered in this effort was Beyond War. Jane and her husband joined Beyond War in the mid-1980s and organized home presentations to which they would invite neighbors, friends, and anyone they could interest.

Some of the early projects I recall working with Jane on were a lecture by Dr. Benjamin Spock and a Peace Walk. We also managed to organize a lecture by Dr. Helen Caldicott. Jane put her all into each project and I recall feeling we could not fail with her on our team. Later I recall all of her effort to organize a Beyond War peace prize "Spacebridge" satellite simulcast at Merrimack College, as host to a community television program on peace, and host to visiting Japanese Hibakusha (survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki). She also helped to organize a local peace activist lecture at her church, St. Michael's and hosted movie nights for MVPP members to see independent peace films in her home.

But that wasn't even the half of it. Jane was a prolific writer. Her daughters have a scrapbook of dozens of her newspaper articles promoting peace assembled over decades. Jane was a very good writer and connected well with her audience.

Jane continued her involvement with North Andover People for Peace/Merrimack Valley People for Peace for roughly 30-35 years despite several health setbacks. She was a true inspiration and friend. Merrimack Valley People for Peace can attribute many of our successes to her vision, energy, and organization.
Katherine Robinson

Coming Events

Lowell Folk Festival, July 25, noon to 6.

Hiroshima Vigil at Andover Old Town Hall, 20 Main St. Thursday, August 6 at 6:00 PM

Bread and Roses festival, Campagnone Common, September 2, MonSeptember 7 noon to 6.

See the vigils list, Page 9.

Mass Peace Action Events:
http://masspeaceaction.org/events/

Membership

***To continue to receive this newsletter*…We Invite You to Join /Rejoin Us**
.(Unless 2026 appears on your label, your dues have expired. Please remember to renew.)

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MVPP is registered with the IRS as a 501(c)(3) organization. Contributions to MVPP are tax deductible.

Check here ☐ if you prefer to receive your newsletter via e-mail**.**

Weekly Vigils

Andover: Sunday, noon-1 pm; Shawsheen Square, Junction of Routes 133 and 28; Lawrence Friends Meeting/ Shawsheen Peace Witness; Allan Sifferlen, 978-397-6432.
Andover: Thursday, 2:30-3:30 pm; in front of Raytheon plant near Routes 133 and 93; Raytheon Peacemakers; Allan Sifferlen, 978-397-6432.
Lawrence 1st and 3rd Sundays at noon, Union and Common St. Free Palestine.
Reading: 2nd Saturday/each month, 11 am-noon; Reading Square; Reading People for Peace; Bob Connor, bobconnor1@yahoo.com.

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PEACE IS
PATRIOTIC

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MVPP President: Brian Quirk. Vice President: Masood Sheikh
Newsletter contributors, Brian Quirk, Katherine Robinson, and Boryana Tacconi,.

CALL AND WRITE YOUR REPRESENTATIVES & SENATORS TO MAKE YOUR VIEWS KNOWN

Every legislator knows one letter is worth a thousand votes.

President Donald Trump (202) 456-1414 switchboard
The White House (202) 456-1111 comments
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500
Contact: www.whitehouse.gov/contact/

Senator Elizabeth Warren (202) 224-4543
317 Hart Senate Office Building Washington DC 20510
Form: www.warren.senate.gov/?p=email_senator

Senator Edward J. Markey (202) 224-2742
218 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510
Form: www.markey.senate.gov/contact

Representative Seth Moulton (District 6)
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Form: https://moulton.house.gov/contact/

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Haverhill Citizens Center 10 Welcome Street
492 Main Street **Acton**, MA 01720 (978) 263-1951
Contact: https://trahan.house.gov/contact/

A link to all in US legislature:
https://ballotpedia.org/List_of_current_members_of_the_U.S._Congress

How Senators and Representatives voted:
Senate:
https://www.congress.gov/roll-call-votes

State Voting Information: Find your representatives at:
http://wheredoivotema.com/bal/MyElectionInfo.aspx

State Bills
https://malegislature.gov/