



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.

January 2018 – June 2018

Good News

Boston judge acquits West Roxbury pipeline protesters. In the last days of March, district judge Mary Ann Driscoll found thirteen protesters "not responsible" after they temporarily halted a pipeline construction by nonviolently lying down in a trench being dug by Spectra Energy to carry fracked gas through West Roxbury. The judge made her ruling after the protesters argued the "necessity defense," saying their civil disobedience was justified by the imperative need to stop climate change.

While the activists said in a release they were disappointed that they would not get the chance to present the case to a jury of their peers, they still felt their resistance had a positive impact. Also, while they didn't stop the pipeline from being built, they did force Spectra Energy to admit **on record** that it didn't have a safety plan in place in the event of a catastrophic failure. 350.org founder Bill McKibben who was set to appear as a witness for the defendants, tweeted: "Good golly! A few minutes ago a Boston judge acquitted 13 pipeline protesters on the grounds that the climate crisis made it necessary for them to commit civil disobedience. This may be a first in America."

Amendment 979 withdrawn from Massachusetts Budget Bill.

After a frantic avalanche of phone calls to MA state representatives, Amendment 979 did not make it into the final version of the state budget bill passed by the Massachusetts House on April 28.

Alerted by Massachusetts Peace Action, Jewish Voice for Peace, and Alliance for Water Justice in Palestine, activists called their representatives and asked that Amendment 979 be withdrawn from the Budget Bill.

The amendment was the exact same text as the anti-BDS bill which the State Administration Committee - after hearing from hundreds of grassroots activists - rejected by an overwhelming vote on February 8. The bill would have classified the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign for Palestinian rights as "discrimination." The ACLU of Massachusetts has stated that the anti-BDS amendment is unconstitutional.

Florida survivors are hitting the road. A day after graduating, a group of Parkland High School shooting survivors announced they will spend their summer "piling on a bus and making stops across America to get young people educated, registered, and motivated to vote."

The students are planning a two-month nationwide tour with a first stop in Chicago on June 15th, where they will be joining the Annual End of School Rally and Peace March organized by the faith community of St. Sabina. From there, as they say in their statement, "We'll be traveling from city to city, focusing on places where the NRA has bought and paid for politicians who refuse to take simple steps to save our lives. We'll also be visiting a number of communities that have been affected by gun violence to meet fellow survivors and use our voice to amplify theirs. We have one simple goal: rally as many young people as possible to register and commit to vote in November."

<http://www.merrimackvalleypeopleforpeace.org/>

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You can view newsletters on line (where most links work) at <http://www.merrimackvalleypeopleforpeace.org/oldmins.hym>

Among the states that the students are planning to visit are Texas, California, Connecticut, South Carolina and Iowa. Updates on the tour can be found on:

<https://marchforourlives.com/road-to-change/>

Teachers' strikes in West Virginia, Oklahoma, Colorado, Arizona, Kentucky and North Carolina this spring varied in their levels of success. However all scored gains, galvanized public support and made millions of people around the country pay attention (if they hadn't yet) to the severe cuts to education that have impacted everything from facilities and infrastructure to textbooks and teacher salaries. As "*The Nation*" puts it in an article from April 19, "The fact that these strikes are occurring in red, "right-to-work" states, where trade unions have limited influence, adds to their political significance and potential."

The West Virginia teachers' and school personnel strike.

February 22 to March 7, spontaneously called in response to anger among teachers and other school employees over low pay and high health care costs; involved roughly 20,000 teachers and public school employees and shut down schools in all 55 West Virginia counties. It achieved a 5% pay raise, but did not provide guarantees to control rising health care costs. One, maybe unexpected, success of the strike was that it inspired teachers in other states to follow their colleagues' example.

The Oklahoma teachers' strike began on April 2, with teachers across the state walking out to protest low pay, overcrowded classrooms, and tax-cuts that resulted in lower state wide education spending. An end to the strike was declared on April 12 after an agreement was reached to increase salaries and state funding for education. Some teachers and *parents* did not believe that enough concessions were made by lawmakers.

The Colorado teachers' strike lasted two and a half weeks, April 27 to May 12, with teachers protesting low pay, low state-wide education spending, and mismanagement of the teachers' pension. It ended with an agreement between the teachers' union and school officials for a 2% pay rise. A bill proposed by two Republican state senators that would fine teachers \$5,000 per day and send teachers to jail for six months for striking was met with harsh criticism and was killed in subcommittee on April 30.

Around 20,000 teachers struck in Arizona from April 26 to May 3 to protest low pay and cuts to school funding. Arizona Governor Doug Ducey had approved a proposal giving a 20% percent raise to teachers by 2020, but the

striking teachers rejected this proposal as it did not provide increased funding for schools themselves or raises for support staff. This was the first such action by teachers in Arizona, where teacher pay is so low that administrators have in recent years recruited teachers from the Philippines to work in public schools under the U.S. J-1 visa program. The strike ended when reluctant lawmakers conceded to increase salaries also for support staff, and to decrease student to counselor ratios.

National Teacher of the Year protests while receiving prize.

The winner of the National Teacher of the Year award held a silent protest on May 2 as she was honored by the president in a White House ceremony. Mandy Manning wore six political buttons as she accepted her award from Trump, while billionaire Education Secretary Betsy DeVos looked on. Manning's buttons featured artwork from the 2017 Women's March, a rainbow flag and the slogan "Trans Equality Now!" She later presented Trump with a stack of letters from her students, teenage refugees at Joel E. Ferris High School in Spokane, Washington. After her protest, Manning told USA Today, "I am here for refugee and immigrant students, for the kids in the gay-straight alliance, and for all the girls I've coached over the years."

"Black Mama's Bail Out Day" bails black women out of jail for Mother's Day.

For the second year in a row, racial justice groups around the country raised money to bail out as many black women from jail as possible. The effort took place in dozens of cities to call attention to the injustice of cash bail. According to the organizers, about one hundred women were bailed out and could spend Mother's Day with their families.

Since last year, when the effort first began, there has been a growing national movement to eliminate cash bail from the criminal justice system. Google and Facebook recently announced that they will no longer take money from America's for-profit bail bond agencies.

Landmark victory for bees in Europe. On April 27, the European Union passed a continent-wide restriction on the use of bee-harming pesticides. Despite immense pressure from the pesticide industry, the EU nations sided with bees.

Citing concerns for food production, the environment and biodiversity, the EU is set to completely ban the outdoor use of three neonicotinoid insecticides that have been blamed for killing bees, birds and wildlife. The decision was hailed by scores of environmental groups which have long campaigned for a ban on neonicotinoids.

Letters From MVPP

Court sides with corporations over workers

Letter to the Editor, *Lawrence Eagle Tribune* May 25, 2018

The Supreme Court has done it again. They have granted more power to corporations and taken rights away from workers.

In this case, they ruled 5 to 4 that employers may enforce binding arbitration clauses in the agreements that employees must sign as a condition of employment. These prohibit workers from banding together to bring class action lawsuits when the company cheats or otherwise abuses them.

It should be noted that this constitutes coercion since the employee must either accept this restriction or not get the job, but this matters not to the conservative justices. This follows on the heels of a similar 2011 ruling that allows companies to make customers sign such agreements (usually buried deep in the fine print of the contracts that nobody reads) as a condition of using their products.

Since the arbitrators are selected and paid by the company — not the aggrieved worker or consumer — they almost always rule in the company's favor.

This constitutes yet another major shift in the balance of power in favor of corporations, which has been the habit of the court for the past 140 years. Since this ruling is based on statute (the 1925 National Arbitration Act and 1935 National Labor Relations Act) Congress could fix this. But, since the Republican Party is owned by giant corporations, it is unlikely to happen. It could also be fixed by state governments, but Republican-controlled states are unlikely to do so either.

It should be noted that President Trump's Justice Department sided with the corporations in this case. It's past time for Trump voters to wake up and realize that their president is shafting them big time while he advances the interests of the rich and powerful.

Michael Bleiweiss
Methuen

Meeting Notes

1/23/18

We discussed Hattie Nestel's "Proposal Regarding Anti-semitism" that she had sent to several organizations including MVPP. While we all strongly reject antisemitism, we also felt that the term needs a more precise definition in the text of the proposal before we vote. In the past MVPP has been accused of antisemitism for organizing an event with Wheels of Justice, supporting another Wheels of Justice event at the Andover High School, and generally making efforts to show the community the Palestinian side of the conflict. We'll contact Hattie and ask if the text of the proposal could make it clear that anti-Semitism and rejecting some policies of Israel are two totally different things.

We discussed an invitation to join forces with "Indivisible" doing voter registration. To be discussed again.

We discussed watching the documentary *AWAKE* about Standing Rock. It is over an hour long, so rather than watching it at the church as part of an event, we could watch at someone's home. It is available on Netflix

2/27/18

Brenton Stoddart from MassPeaceAction, spoke about the 3rd Congressional District Campaign, "MA3 Grassroots." They are collecting information on the positions of all candidates in District 3. They hope to identify candidates that are progressive and peace-oriented. They are asking that those who want to help ask questions of candidates, then report to the group so they can add data points to their information sets. The project is geared toward making democracy more accessible by making information available to voters.

The Monks of Walk for a New Spring will be visiting on March 22. We offered places to stay and Boryana will call others.

Niki Rosen has moved, which is always a difficult adjustment. Visits and phone calls appreciated.

MVPP's statement against anti-Semitism was discussed. The revised wording had been approved via email by MVPP and Hattie and Marcia. MVPP had concerns because MVPP has itself been accused of anti-Semitism for opposing some policies of the Israeli government. The agreed on wording was:

"The MVPP abhors and denounces anti-Semitism, degrading statements against Jewish people, as well as racist comments against any ethnic group." We would use this statement when applicable.

Barbara reported that Seth Moulton is speaking at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) meeting.

Representatives from an Arlington group have called Brian and Kathie to recommend "*National Bird*," a movie about drones. We are still talking about showing the movie about Standing Rock. We talked about organizing a showing at a library, then thought we should review the movie first

3/27/18

Dee talked about "Freedom for All Massachusetts" a group to prevent repeal of the Public Accommodations Act that provides protection for transgender people's access to public accommodations (not just rest rooms, but locker rooms, hotels, transportation, shelters, medical care, etc). They are looking for volunteers to help in the public education campaign. We agreed it should be included in our newsletter. (See p. 5)

Boryana also brought to our attention Chelsea Manning's interview on the broadcast, *Democracy Now!*

Adaela McLaughlin had asked if we could 'endorse' her study group. We agreed that we didn't know enough about how we might support her. We thought we should invite her to a meeting to tell us more. We talked about advertising her site, but then thought that we should be advertising Indivisibles and other resistance groups, which led to a discussion of some of those groups

Working with local groups: We need to assemble a list of groups and contacts we might work with

Movies: Since we keep tabling discussion of showing the Standing Rock movie, we wondered if we should drop it from the agenda

Peter suggested showing "*Occupation of the American Mind*" about Israel/Palestine. He will look into how to have it shown at the Andover library. Dee suggested documenting the process for future reference

4/24/18

We agreed to give North Parish Church \$75 for the use of space while we hosted Walk for New Spring walkers.

The MA3 Grassroots group is asking for input regarding the large field of candidates vying for the seat of retiring Nikki Tsongas from Congress, and it is seeking volunteers to question the candidates about their positions.

We should be aware of the referendum that will be on the Nov. ballot to repeal LGBTQ rights. Massachusetts residents will vote this November on whether to repeal a 2016 law prohibiting discrimination in public places based on gender identity.

Discussion around our relationship with other groups with similar interests. We thought we should become acquainted with some of them and perhaps become more involved. For example we partner with the Merrimack Valley Project (MVP), Veterans for Peace, North Shore Coalition and Mass Peace Action (MAPA). There are other local groups and Brian will compile a list for our web site. In the meantime, Peter has volunteered to attend a meeting at MVP, and Boryana will be involved with non-violence resistance training with the Poor People's Campaign.

Nominating Committee for next year's Officers and Board will be headed by Barbara, Masood and Peter.

5/22/18

Being close to Memorial Day we remembered some founding members: Alison Ceplicas, Ed Meagher, Gwendolyn Smith, Elizabeth Elliot, and Jacob Zar

The MVPP Annual Meeting will be June 22. The speaker will be Adelina Janiak.re. Immigrants rights.

We will register to have our table at the Lowell Folk Festival, Bread and Roses, and Andover Days. We'll start planning the August 6, Hiroshima commemoration near the Old Town Hall or Library.

The MA3 Grassroots organizing meeting needs volunteers to question candidates.

Working with local groups to keep anti war arguments on their agendas. Brian has started compiling a list of contacts provided by members.

Movies about Israel/Palestine, drones, and Standing Rock, Boryana has talked with Stefani Traina at Memorial Library in Andover, who is enthusiastic about showing movies.

Action

CIVIL RIGHTS UNDER ATTACK IN MASSACHUSETTS

In case you haven't heard, there is a ballot question that will appear on this November's ballot that, if passed, would repeal protection for transgender people in public spaces. What this means is that, if the repeal passes, the state would return to a situation where a transgender person could be refused service by restaurants, cabs, buses, homeless shelters, and even medical facilities.

Freedom for All Massachusetts is leading the fight to prevent the repeal. But they need our help. It is estimated that it will take thousands of volunteers hours to canvass, phonebank, and raise money to support the effort to counter the false negative messaging of those who oppose civil rights for transgender people. And there are just 20 weeks left until the election!

There are a number of ways that people can help. There are phone banks to call known supporters to recruit volunteers. There are phone banks to educate the public. On Saturdays and at public events there is canvassing to educate the public on the issue. Help with data entry is also needed. And you can offer to put up some of the out-of-town volunteers working on the campaign to save transgender civil rights.

If you'd like to discuss how you can help, contact Pat Taber, pat@FreedomMassachusetts.com, 978-828-4571.

Recent Events

At our **annual potluck** in January, we honored our recently deceased friend and long term MVPP member **Tom Gale** by watching two of the 110 documentary videos he produced and placed on YouTube. Several of us also attended the memorial service for Tom at the Northshore UU church in Danvers on January 20.

Barbara Haack participated with 5,000 people in the Cambridge/Boston **Women's March** on January 20. Mary and Jim Todd, Brian and Boryana were part of the Andover Women's March the next day together with over 200 participants. The Andover March was organized by the Andover Area Solidarity Group and got coverage in the Eagle Tribune.

75 people stood in the rain at the **Newburyport vigil against gun violence** on February 25. Barbara Haack

participated. The event was covered by the *Daily News of Newburyport*.

Kathy Kelly spoke in the Community Church of Boston on February 18: "The Cost of War, the Prize of Peace". <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QSql6Ny9HxY>

In February and March, **Bruce Gagnon's 37 day hunger strike** exposed a proposal for Maine tax breaks to General Dynamics/Bath Iron Works. Mary Kate, Boryana, and others supported Bruce with their own shorter fasts. The Maine Legislature's Joint Committee on Taxation voted 11-2 that the bill "ought to pass," but with the tax break capped at \$45 million over 15 years.

On March 22, we shared a potluck and spent an inspiring evening with the Buddhist monks and friends from the Peace Pagoda in Leverett on the **17th annual Walk for a New Spring**. The walkers stayed overnight with those of us who had offered hospitality. The theme of this year's walk was "Peace for the People, Peace for the Earth."

Our peace flags were present at Boston's **Walk for Our Lives** March 24 which united around 50,000 people of all ages calling for gun control. The march and rally were part of the nationwide demonstration inspired and organized by the surviving students of the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL. Ruth Canonico participated at the Walk for Our Lives event in Chelmsford together with over 600 people.

April 19: The **Tax Day rally** was cold, but Brian saw at least 100 people and good speakers, including some from the Poor People's campaign. The rally on the Cambridge Common was organized by Massachusetts Peace Action and their MA People's Budget Campaign.

On April 19, Boryana attended a meeting of **Merrimack Valley Social Justice Meetup** at the Andover UU Church. This new group is in the process of studying priorities. We should keep in touch and attend future meetings when possible.

On May 9, Dee, Kathie and Boryana attended a **Freedom for All Massachusetts** meeting at the South Church in Andover.

MVPP members took part at the **Jericho Walk** for Immigrants in front of the ICE building in Burlington, MA on May 3 and June 5. The Jericho Walk is a silent, peaceful, and prayerful walk to bring down the walls of our unjust immigration system and is open to people of all or no faiths. The Burlington walks were organized in part by the Merrimack Valley Interfaith Sanctuary Network. Thanks to Pastor Will Green of the Ballardvale United Church for

being one of the leaders of the march and for inviting us to participate.

Boryana and Brian attended **MA3 Grassroots** organizing meetings and helped develop handouts. Now we need volunteers to pose questions to candidates running for Rep. Niki Tsongas' place in Congress.

<https://www.ma3grassroots.com/>

The **Shout Heard Round the World** demonstration was held at Hanscom AF base on Sunday, May 27. Hanscom is to be a communications center coordinating U.S forces in a nuclear war. John Schuchardt and five others were arrested by the Lincoln police for trespassing as they attempted to deliver a letter protesting nuclear weapons development to the base commander. Charges were dismissed.

<http://masspeaceaction.org/event/shout-heard-around-the-world/>

On Monday May 28, **Memorial Day**, the Smedley Butler Brigade of Veterans for Peace (VFP) set up 30 tents for an overnight encampment on the Boston Common and held a rally and teach-in jointly with the [Poor People's Campaign](#) from 1 pm to 6 pm. Participants and passersby listened to speakers with themes of Veterans Speak Out, Middle East, War at Home, Gun Violence, People's Budget; and to songs and poetry. At 3 pm, a procession led by Veterans and by bagpiper Brian Quirk marched up for a solemn ceremony at the Soldiers and Sailors Monument. Many veterans and other activists spent the night in the tents. The event continued on Tuesday, May 29, when Poor People's Campaign participants rallied at 2 pm across from the State House to protest the War Economy, Militarism, and Gun Violence. Following the rally, several participants entered the State House seeking a conversation with elected officials about the war economy. At Governor Baker's office, Dan Luker from VFP read aloud the Campaign's demands and presented an American flag inscribed with names of soldiers fallen in combat, PTSD suicides and civilians lost to gun violence. MVPP members participated in the events both Monday and Tuesday.

A memorial stone for Tom Gale was installed on the hill behind the House of Peace in Ipswich and dedicated with a beautiful ceremony on June 2. The stone is a creation of

Tom's friend and fellow Veterans for Peace member Martin Ray. After sitting in a circle and sharing memories of Tom, poetry, reflections and songs, we went to the top of the hill and stood around the stone. John Schuchardt performed a ritual sage smudging all around. Everyone in their turn poured some water on the stone and Pat Scanlon led us in "Last Night I Had the Strangest Dream."

Coming Events

June 22, Friday, 6:30 pm MVPP annual potluck.

Speaker about current immigrant problems, Adelina Janiak, a lawyer from the Northeast Justice Center.

At the [North Parish Church](#)

190 Academy Rd.

North Andover.

Jy 21-22 Rolling Ridge Peace Conference

Four speakers and a singer:

<https://www.rollingridge.org/event/summer-peace-conference-2018-11121945>

At the 8th annual Peace Conference our theme this year: **THE TIE THAT BINDS** - Creation Care and Interfaith Dialogue. Saturday afternoon, we will be hosting a panel of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim environmental leaders who will be sharing about the spiritual roots of creation care in their faith tradition and then discussing the common ground that unites them for environmental action. Saturday evening will feature a free community concert with Fred Small, musician and climate justice minister. Sunday afternoon, we will be holding workshops which delve deeper into various topics related to interfaith creation care.

July 28, Saturday Table at the Lowell Folk Festival

August 6, Monday Vigil commemorating the bombing of Hiroshima

September 3, Monday table at Bread and Roses Festival

September 8 Saturday table at Andover Days

Membership

**To continue to receive this newsletter... We Invite You to Join /Rejoin Us
(Unless 2018 appears on your label, your dues have expired. Please remember to renew.)**

\$20.00 Individual

\$10.00 Student/Senior

\$30.00 Family

Circle One

\$50.00 Supporting

\$75.00 Sustaining

\$100.00 Peacemaker

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P.O. Box 573
North Andover, MA 01845

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, 7:00-8:00 am; in front of Raytheon plant near Routes 133 and 93; Raytheon Peacemakers; Allan Sifferlen, 978-397-6432.

Gloucester: Saturday, noon-1 pm; Grant Circle.

Marblehead: Tuesday, 6:30-7:19pm in front of the high school and Community Center at the lights at the intersection of Humphrey-Pleasant and Lafayette Sts.; Tom Gale, 781-631-1218.

Nashua, NH in front of Nashua City Hall from 11 to Noon every Sat. www.nashuapeace.org

Newburyport: Sunday, noon-1 pm; Market Square; Paul Paulsen (978) 462-7894

Reading: 2nd Saturday/each month, 11 am-noon; Reading Square; Reading People for Peace; Bob Connor, bobconnor1@yahoo.com.

Rockport: Wednesday, noon-1 pm; First Congregational Church (silent for peace).

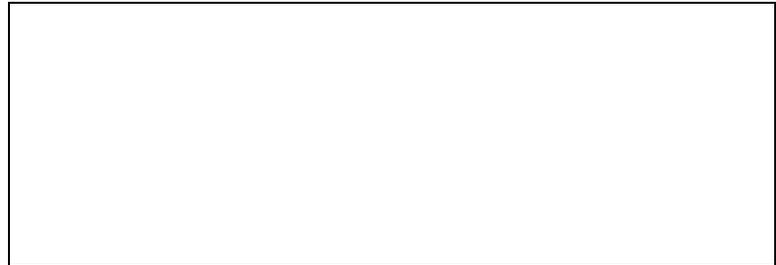
Salem, MA: Saturday, 11-noon; Riley Plaza (by the Post Office).

Merrimack Valley People For Peace
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<http://www.merrimackvalleypeopleforpeace.org/>

PEACE IS
PATRIOTIC

ANNUAL MEETING
Fri. June 22 at 6:30



The MVPP Newsletter is printed periodically and has a current distribution of 100. We are grateful for suggestions, comments, and help with publication

MVPP President: Brian Quirk. Vice President: Boryana Tacconi.

Newsletter contributors: Arthur and Margaret Brien, Barbara Haack, Dee Halzack, Brian Quirk, 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 comments
The White House (202) 456-1111 switchboard
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)
1408 Longworth
House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515 21 Front Street
(202) 225-8020 Salem, MA 01970
fax (202) 225-5915 (978) 531-1669 fax (978) 224-2270
Form: <https://moulton.house.gov/contact/>

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fax: 202-226-0771 (978) 681-6200 fax:(978) 682-6870
<http://tsongas.house.gov> E-mail: AskNiki@mail.house.gov

11 Kearney Square, 3rd floor (978) 459-0101
Lowell, MA 01852 fax: (978) 459-1907

A link to all in US legislature:
thomas.loc.gov/home/legbranch/legbranch.html

How Senators and Representatives voted:

Senate:

www.senate.gov/reference/common/faq/how_to_votes.htm

House: clerk.house.gov/evs/2004/index.asp

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