

The Berkshire News-Letter

Published By Our Own Authority

Berkshire Win Without War

Numb. 1

May 19, 2003

Welcome Fellow Americans

This is the first issue of The Berkshire News-Letter. We hope that this publication will be of interest to those of us seeking truth in media and a wider view of international relations. We will also try to provide information on local and national events of interest. It is our belief that an informed public can make informed choices. We believe that the majority of Americans wish to live in peace. We believe that the majority of Americans want good education for their children, affordable healthcare, fair benefits for veterans and a clean and healthy planet. All of this takes money. How our government uses our tax dollars is important to all of us.

This news-letter is based on the first continuously published newspaper in the United States. In 1704 the early colonists published a newspaper called *The Boston News-Letter*. In it was news from Europe and the world, the latest information on wars, shipping news and local announcements and events. We think our news-letter serves several of those same purposes. Thus we have chosen the same style as that early historic document. The *Berkshire News-Letter* is a newspaper for our neighbors and our community as we all strive for a better America.

Noam Chomsky, internationally known MIT professor, is the author of numerous books. His latest book *9-11* is published by Seven Stories Press an independent publisher in New York. In January he spoke in Porte Alegre, Brazil. This quotation is from his speech heard on Alternative Radio.

"We are meeting at a moment of world history that is in many ways unique. A moment that is ominous, but also full of hope. The most powerful state in world history has proclaimed, loud and clear, that it intends to rule the world by force. That is the dimension in which it reigns supreme. The war with Iraq is intended, in part, to teach the world some lessons about what lies ahead when the empire decides to strike a blow. That is surely one of the main reasons for the war. The empire has also declared explicitly and precisely that it will tolerate no competitors, now or in the future. Its leaders believe that the means of violence in their hands are so extraordinary that they can dismiss with contempt anyone who stands in their way."

Update on U.S. Occupation

In the wake of widespread chaos and looting that the Bush administration failed to prevent, Iraqi Shiite groups have emerged as the most organized political force in Iraq. In Baghdad's eastern quarter (formerly known as Saddam City) and major cities in the south, armed Shiite militias patrol the streets. Within the Shiite community, there is an intense rivalry between the Shiite establishment in Najaf and fundamentalist political movements. Although most Iraqi Shiites tend to be secular, the fundamentalists have tens of thousands of armed militiamen. This could put them on a collision course with Iraq's Sunni population and others who oppose an Iraq ruled by ayatollahs

Lawlessness in many areas and potential clashes between rival factions make Iraq dangerously volatile. Without security, Iraq cannot be rebuilt, and humanitarian agencies cannot deliver supplies or reestablish essential services. With a long, hot summer just beginning, the risks only grow. Over one million Iraqi children are chronically malnourished, and 40% of the population has no access to clean water.

The Bush administration was unprepared to properly restore order following the collapse of the regime. Despite this, the administration does not appear to want the assistance of the United Nations peacekeeping forces. To make matters worse, there are no signs that the U.S. combat forces currently deployed in Iraq are being trained to handle post-conflict, civil security needs. For more information go to www.epic-usa.org

Food for Thought

Bill Moyers talks with Bill Gates [excerpts]:

MOYERS: What does it say to you that half of all 15 year olds in South Africa and Zimbabwe could lose their lives to AIDS? What does it say to you that 11 million children, roughly, die every year from preventable diseases? What does it say to you that of the 4 million babies who die within their first month, 98 percent are from poor countries? What do those statistics tell you about the world?

GATES: It really is a failure of capitalism...

MOYERS: But markets are supposed to deliver goods and services to people.

GATES: And when people have money it does.

Action Corner

In this section of the News-Letter you can find things to do; letter writing, petition signing, speaking out. Talk is good but sometimes we just need to DO something. If you have some ideas, please send them along and we will print them here.

On June 2, the Federal Communications Commission is planning on authorizing sweeping changes to the American news media. The rule changes could allow your local TV stations, newspaper, radio stations, and cable provider to all be owned by one company. NBC, ABC, CBS and Fox could have the same corporate parent. When we talk to Congresspeople about this issue, their response is usually the same: "We only hear from media lobbyists on this. It seems like my constituents aren't very concerned with this issue." A few thousand emails could permanently change that perception. Please join us in asking Congress and the FCC to fight media deregulation at: <http://www.moveon.org/stopthefcc/>

May 7, 2003

Broward County, Florida, the 14th largest county in the U.S., yesterday unanimously passed a resolution affirming the Bill of Rights and registering strong concerns about the PATRIOT Act. Broward is the 100th community to pass such a resolution and the largest to have done so, according to the Northampton Bill of Rights Committee, which tracks all such resolutions. Broward is best known nationally as being one of the counties where the election controversy of 2000 played out. The Commissioners, some of whom are staunch Republicans, broke today with that negative image and showed the nation that they support the important efforts to uphold the Bill of Rights and repeal or amend the USA PATRIOT Act.

Events and Announcements - Please send your announcements to the address below to be included in next week's *Berkshire News-Letter*.

***Berkshire Win Without War* meets on alternating Monday evenings at St. James Church in Great Barrington at 7:00 p.m. All are welcome.
**Vigil every evening from 5:15 to 6:15 on the corner of Castle and Main Streets in Great Barrington. Please join us.

The *Berkshire News-Letter* is published by *Berkshire Win Without War*. Editor: Laura Smith. The News-Letter welcomes your comments, letters and opinions. You can email the News-Letter at info@berkshirewinwithoutwar.org or mail us directly at PO Box 152, Great Barrington, MA 01230. Visit our website at berkshirewinwithoutwar.org.

"Non-violence leads to the highest ethics, which is the goal of all evolution. Until we stop harming all other living beings, we are still savages."
Thomas A. Edison

STATE OF THE STATES 2003...MASSACHUSETTS



NATIONAL PRIORITIES PROJECT ♦ LOCALIZED REPORTS SINCE 1983

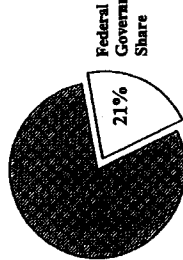
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The Federal Government Matters to Your State

In Massachusetts, the federal government contributes 18% to your state budget. This money pays for schools, public assistance, roads and other programs important to Massachusetts residents.

While most states struggle through fiscal crises and budget cuts, the federal government's spending cuts threaten to make it even more difficult for Massachusetts to meet its people's needs.

Total State Budgets in the US



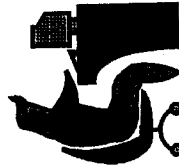
A Snapshot of Needs in Massachusetts:

Families Living in Poverty.....	11%
Children Living in Poverty.....	18%
Households Threatened by Food Shortages.....	7%
People without Health Insurance.....	10%
Children without Health Insurance.....	8%
Renters without Affordable Housing.....	40%

How Much Does it Take to Get By in Massachusetts?

Nationally, seven million people earn the federal minimum wage with another ten million earning up to a dollar more. Compare the living wage for a family of three and the minimum wage in Massachusetts. Then, take into consideration that public assistance in your state for a family of three only pays \$579 a month.

Living Wage.....	\$19.34 per hour
Minimum Wage.....	\$6.75 per hour



Source: Page 1: Federal contribution figures are based on the Census Bureau's survey of governments, 1999. Poverty, food security and health insurance data is from the Current Population Survey and is an average of 1999-2001. Renters without affordable housing is from Census 2000. Public assistance figures are from the Administration of Children and Families. The living wage is inflation-adjusted data from the NPP report, *Working Hard, Earning Less*, 1999. The minimum wages for each state is from the Dept. of Labor. Page 2: Budget data is from the Office of Management and Budget, *World military spending is from Security Policy Working Group, A Safer America? Experts Respond to the Bush Administration and Congress*, 2003. Tax cut distribution data is from the Joint Committee on Taxation.



Threats to Federal Domestic Spending

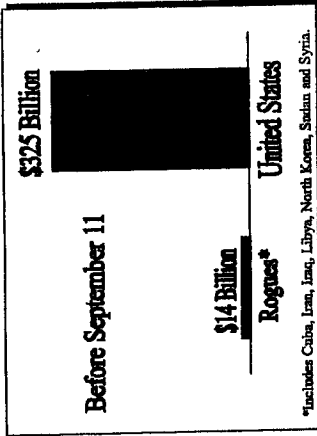
FY2002 ended with a \$157 billion deficit. Meanwhile, the Bush Administration is pursuing two expensive policies – a military build-up and making the tax cuts of 2001 permanent.

The Pentagon versus Everything Else

This year, while the military benefited from an 11% increase, after inflation has been taken into account, all other discretionary spending combined was cut by 1%.

Cuts include energy conservation, pollution control, funding for highways and community development, higher education and training and employment.

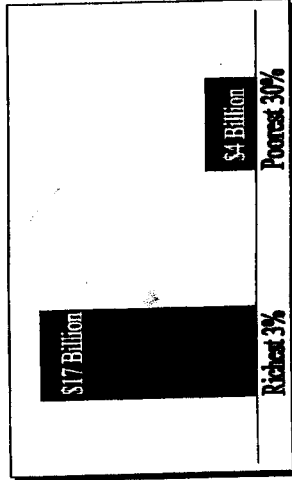
Spending on national security clearly won out over meeting the needs of working families. The Bush Administration proposed a \$46 billion increase in military spending for 2003. But even before September 11, the United States already spent two and a half times more than all of its adversaries combined, including Russia and China. Many experts question whether this money is buying Americans more security or simply a larger deficit and cuts in domestic programs.



Tax Cuts for the Wealthy

The Bush Administration also seeks to make permanent the 2001 tax cut, a 10-year package aimed primarily at the wealthy. In 2003, while the top 3% will save \$17 billion on their tax bills, the poorest 30% will only save a collective \$4 billion.

The Administration claims that making the tax cut permanent will help the economy. Instead it will favor the wealthy at a tremendous cost to the federal budget. In its current version, it will cost \$1.3 trillion by 2011.



The National Priorities Project offers citizens and community groups the tools and resources to shape federal policy and budget priorities. For more information about your state visit the NPP Database at www.nationalpriorities.org/database or contact us:

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