



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.

August 2024 – June 2025

GOOD NEWS

In the avalanche of devastating news to which we wake up every day, how can we find anything to print in this traditional opening of the MVPP newsletter?!! And still –

Nonviolent protests going strong and accelerating.

On streets and highway passes, at intersections and in parks, millions of Americans continue to turn out to protest against the Trump administration and its policies. The protests have already dwarfed those in 2017, and they have been extraordinarily peaceful. Protests in many locations started as soon as DOGE was unleashed on several federal government agencies, and snowballed very quickly.

3 to 5 million people showed up on April 5 at the **Hands Off** protest held in over 1,400 locations in all 50 states.

Protests were held on **April 19** and **May Day** nationwide, and according to observers accounted for up to 1.8 million participants.

The **No Kings** protest on June 14 saw over 5 million people in more than 2,100 locations in all 50 states.

The **Good Trouble Lives On** protests on July 17, honoring the five-year anniversary of the death of Congressman and civil rights leader John Lewis, were held at more than 1,600 locations nationwide against policies that include mass deportations, and cuts to Medicaid, SNAP and other safety nets for low income people.

A new encouraging fact is that protests are everywhere. We don't see too many people organizing rides to Washington D.C., New York, or other major cities. The big cities of course see big crowds, but people also show up in the streets of their hometowns week after week and month after month. Some rallies focus on one particular problem as for instance ICE raids, or No war with Iran, or Tesla dealerships, or saving the US Postal Service. But mostly, the many homemade and creative posters show concern about a kaleidoscope of issues, with an accent on preserving Democracy, respecting the Constitution, as well as calls to kindness to one's neighbors. Our favorite, seen at a rally in Boston: "*So Many Wrongs, So Little Cardboard!*"

The local rallies attract some people who have never been at a protest before. Also, they are noticed by local passersby, many of whom – at least in our experience – react with deafening honks. In the words of one participant: "This is why the protests should not be D.C. or New York focused. When there's 300 people in front of the local high school, and you go by there Saturday on the way to Walmart, it's harder to claim it never happened. Or that you didn't see it."

In our vicinity weekly protests are being held in Andover, North Andover, and Wakefield. In the

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

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

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Burlington Mall, a steadily expanding group of area residents is gathering outside the ICE office at 1000 District Ave every Wednesday “to show love and support for the immigrants being detained and bear witness to our government’s unconstitutional actions, and direct our collective shame at ICE.”

Communities standing up for people detained by ICE. Amidst the many nightmare stories of ICE raids we learn about some rays of light and hope. When **Marcelo Gomes da Silva**, an honor roll high school student in **Milford, MA** was arrested on his way to volleyball practice in the late May, hundreds lined Main Street in his support. Graduates of Milford High School’s class of 2025 marched a mile to the town hall in caps and gowns right after graduation and staged a rally calling for Marcelo’s release. They were joined by many teachers, hundreds of community members and also by US Rep. Jake Auchincloss. The local resistance continued in the next days with students walking out of class, residents writing affidavits attesting Marcelo’s standing in the community and supporting the family. Marcelo was released after five days in ICE custody, but the mobilization continues. Residents are now holding community meetings to discuss how to prepare to future situations and assist the families of people who have been detained. That includes an emergency mutual aid fund to provide legal support and pay for bond, as well as an ICE watch group that monitors the agency’s presence. Just for background information, 42 percent of the town residents had voted for Trump in 2024.

Camden County officials and community members have been rallying outside the Jersey Kabob restaurant in **Haddon Township, NJ**, denouncing the arrest by ICE of the owners, **Celal and Emine Emanet**, on February 25. “We couldn’t ask for better people to be in our community, better people to have a business in our community. And it truly is a tragedy,” said Haddon Township Mayor Randall Teague. “The entire community feels so bad that something like this could happen to such good people.” He described the

couple’s restaurant as a “pillar” in the town and praised the family for organizing food drives that have “left a lasting impact” on the community.

The Emanets came from Turkey in 2008 on student visas and have been going through the immigration process since 2016. They have been awaiting word on their green card applications when they were picked up by ICE agents.

“This family embodies the very best of Camden County,” said Camden County Commissioner Director Louis Capelli Jr. “It is time to stand up for good people. It is time to stand up for humanity. These folks do not deserve this. Fix the immigration system and let’s fix it now.”

Haddon Township residents have been showing support for the couple by writing letters on their behalf, setting up a GoFundMe for the family, putting up heart shaped stickers with kind words all over the restaurant building and rallying in the street.

Celal Emanet was released with an ankle monitor, Emine Emanet spent two weeks in detention before being released on bail. Their immigration status is still in limbo. In the meantime, they continue to feed the community and to offer free food to homeless people.

Dozens of residents of **Kennett, MO**, on June 4 welcomed home **Carol Mayorga (Ming Li Hui)**, who has lived there for almost 20 years and was detained in April during what she thought was a routine meeting with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services office to renew the document issued by the federal government that allows her to work legally in the U.S. and is set to expire in January 2026. During that meeting, ICE officers shackled the mother of three and transported her first to one jail, then over a month later to another.

Kennett, in Dunklin County, is a conservative area. In 2024, Trump carried Dunklin County with 80% of the vote. Nevertheless, many believed that deporting Carol was morally wrong and could not be what the nation’s new immigration policy intended. The small town

rallied for the release of the woman whom they knew as their favorite server at John's Waffle and Pancake House, as a devoted and hardworking mom of three U.S.-born children aged 14, 12 and 7, active member of the Catholic Church, and whom they describe as "a fabric of our community." Her employers called local officials and members of Congress. They also organized a "Carol Day" fundraiser that raised almost \$20,000 for Mayorga, her legal fees and her family. Kennett has 10,000 people.

It took a village to bring Carol Mayorga home. May they be able to keep her there.

Many people in the town of **Sackets Harbor in upstate New York** celebrated in the first week of April the return of a migrant family – a mother and three children - detained in March by U.S. Customs and Border Protection during a nighttime raid on a dairy farm and sent to an ICE detention center in Texas. The family has been on track to become legal citizens, including attending court hearings. The children, one in elementary school and two in high school, have been enrolled at Sackets Harbor's K-12 school for a couple of years.

School officials and teachers, and the larger Sackets Harbor community began calling for their release, which culminated in a rally that drew over 1000 people in this tiny town. An interesting detail here is that protesters marched past a vacation home which belongs to Trump appointed "border czar" Tom Homan.

As a result of the school and the community's efforts, both Democratic and Republican politicians lobbied for the family's return. Governor Hochul also was involved.

"We commend the strength of the Sackets Harbor community for standing up with one voice to support their community members, classmates and friends," wrote Murad Awawdeh, President and CEO, New York Immigration Coalition. "The Sackets Harbor community's steadfast concern, care and love for their neighbors is what brought this family home."

We have also celebrated the release of several people who are in this country legally but have been illegitimately detained because of **speaking up for Palestinian rights:**

Columbia University graduate **Mahmoud Khalil** - a legal permanent resident married to a U.S. citizen - who spent 104 days in a Louisiana detention center and couldn't be present for the birth of his first child;

Tufts Ph.D. Fulbright scholar **Rümeysa Öztürk**, who was arrested by six masked plainclothes agents in the street near her home in Somerville and spent 45 days in detention in Louisiana;

Columbia University student **Mohsen Mahdawi**, who was detained at the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) in Colchester, Vermont, where USCIS had scheduled an interview for him to become a U.S. citizen;

Georgetown University postdoctoral fellow and professor **Badar Khan Suri**, who spent two months in detention.

Rallies have been held and countless phone calls to elected officials have been made on behalf of each one of them.

The National Education Association has voted to sever ties with the Anti-Defamation League. In a July 6 vote, the Representative Assembly of NEA cut all ties with the Anti-Defamation League which has been a constant presence in US schools for forty years. The seven-thousand-member Assembly approved a measure that the NEA "will not use, endorse, or publicize materials from the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), such as its curricular materials or statistics" because "Despite its reputation as a civil rights organization, the ADL is not the social justice educational partner it claims to be."

Union members speaking on the floor rejected the ADL's misuse of the term "anti-Semitism" to punish critics of Israel, its characterization of calls for Palestinian rights as "hate speech" and even mentioned

that the ADL has been using “hyperinflated statistics on hate crime” to increase fears about Jewish safety.

Boycotts work. The consumer boycott of Target for abandoning DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) has led to a 17 percent drop in the value of his stock. A similar boycott of Walmart has contributed to an 18 percent drop in its stock value for the month of May alone. On the other hand, corporations like Costco which have stood firm against Trump and in favor of DEI, have done well.

Meeting Notes/Events

July 23, 2024

We planned for summer outreach events:.

- Lowell Folk Festival on July 27, 2024. Kathie, Brian and 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 had cleared it with Town of Andover.
- Bread & Roses festival on Labor Day September 1, Brian had registered.
- MVPP will not participate in Andover Day.

Masood reported on protests against Benjamin Netanyahu’s Washington, DC visit to address the US Congress. There were local and national protests reported and planned.

The Lowell Folk Festival was well attended.

August 27, 2024

MVPP held the Hiroshima Vigil in front of the Old Town Hall in Andover .

September 24, 2024

Keep Space for Peace vigils will be on 10/6 at Shawsheen Square and 10/10 at Raytheon

Individuals called Senators Markey and Warren urging them to sign on to the Joint Resolution of Disapproval to block additional arms sales to Israel, as introduced

jointly by Sen. Bernie Sanders with Senators Welch and Merkley.

Allan asked us to consider picking up some of the tasks of Ian Harrington (AFSC) whose untimely death we were mourning. This would include working with the Friends Committee for National Legislation in lobbying Congress.

At the Bread and Roses Festival, we had good conversations and picked up a couple of new members, one of whom was Arthur Brien's grandson. Our dear friend and MVPP member Lou Bernieri was awarded the Bread and Roses Hall of Fame award for 2024. We were delighted to see Lou and be there during the presentation ceremony.

The September meeting ended with a conversation about the wars in the Middle East, the Newton, MA shooting, and the upcoming elections.

October 29, 2024

Newsletters were sent. Some have been returned as undeliverable. Kathie and Brian will update the mailing list.

Kathie offered her home for MVPP’s annual Stone Soup event. She proposed that it be held at 1:00 pm on Saturday, November 23, 2024 to be suitable for all attendees.

MVPP had written to support Senator Bernie Sander’s Joint Resolution of Disapproval to block a \$20 Billion weapons transfer to Israel (which seemed to violate U.S. and International laws).

MAPA joined MVPP members for the weekly Raytheon Vigil on Thursday, September 19. The vigil was reported by The Eagle Tribune and Andover Townsman.

The upcoming election was briefly discussed.

MVPP decided to not endorse a letter by National Iranian American Council (NIAC) against expanding war in the Middle East. It was suggested that letters from specialized lobbying organizations be circulated among the members for their consideration before asking for a vote. There are many new special interest groups to be aware of.

November 23, 2024

Our stone soup lunch was pleasant, and we collected a donation to Oxfam.

No meeting in December, as usual.

January 28, 2025

Kathie, Brian and Barbara have formed a Donations Committee and will meet in early February for deliberations.

Some of the attendees who had watched the movie “From Ground Zero” commented on how the experience had affected them.

The attendees engaged in discussion about life under Trump 2.0, and options for MVPP action. It was agreed that joining other activists may be the most productive course. Brian, Boryana, and Allan will contact Quakers, MAPA, Merrimack Valley Project and Indivisible Andover to explore areas of joint action.

It was mentioned that the Quakers and ACLU had already filed suits against some of Trump’s executive orders.

February 25, 2025

Brian had not been able to schedule a meeting of the Donations Committee due to his flu.

Allan Sifferlen reported about MAPA pursuing a State House bill demanding divestment from companies selling weapons to Israel.

Democracy for the Arab World Now (DAWN) has asked the International Criminal Court (ICC) to investigate the Biden administration for aiding Israel’s war crimes in Palestine.

Some members raised doubts about the utility of peace vigils and protest as they do not seem to affect political realities. Various justifications for vigils included: clearing one’s own conscience, stopping use of tax dollars for genocide, speaking truth to the authorities, and keeping ideas alive.

Boryana and Brian attended a pro-Ukraine rally of a thousand people in Boston on February 24. Boryana had attended rallies and a lobbying event with Indivisible Andover.

A group of Quaker congregations is suing the Department of Homeland Security regarding restricting ICE arrests in houses of worship.

The attendees engaged in a heated discussion about the war in Ukraine and Trump’s efforts to end it. All lamented the tremendous loss of life and infrastructure. Some opined that the war could have been avoided by reaching a negotiated settlement. However, most were troubled by Trump’s plan to end the war at Ukraine’s expense and did not agree with Trump blaming Ukraine for starting the war.

March 25, 2025

Immigrants: Allan contacted the Merrimack Valley Project and the Quaker Meeting House in Dover. Boryana reported on Indivisible resources; and on repeatedly calling MA elected officials on behalf of Columbia student activist Mahmoud Khalil, arrested by ICE and detained in Louisiana.

There were several minutes of free talk, first about Immigrant’s problems, then about the Signal Chat scandal, Trump’s national security advisor Waltz accidentally including a journalist on seeing military secrets.

- Divestment: Allan has written to MA Representative Tram Nguen and asked for a meeting to discuss H2984 a MA House Bill to require the Pension Reserves Investment Management to divest from companies providing military equipment to Israel. Tram Nguen was not easily available.

Allan also proposed that MVPP work on H 1264/S.767, the bill that would require the Massachusetts administration to divest public pension funds from all entities involved in manufacturing, producing, selling, or promoting weapons of mass destruction. Kathy said that she is interested to get behind it. So were other participants in the meeting

It seems that we do not have a unified position on Ukraine.

MVPP's weekly vigils at Shawsheen Square and Raytheon are continuing. In addition, members have been at protests in Boston and elsewhere.

Upcoming Events: Hands Off protest on April 5th, participation in Pat Scanlon's Climate Change Music Video

The Donation Committee (Kathie, Barbara and Brian) stayed behind after the meeting.

May 6 2025

We'd moved the date because our president was traveling.

Our annual donations were mailed out, and Kathie listed them (pretty similar to past years).

Pat Scanlon's video has been completed and distribution begun. It is on his site at <https://patscanlonmusic.com/>

Michael Bleiweiss, Pat Scanlon, and Boryana Tacconi, joined Andover Indivisible in meeting with MA State Senator Barry Feingold, MA Rep Tram Nguen, Mass Dem director Alex Bausch, and field director of MA AG, Jess Laverty. The meeting of over a hundred people was called Massachusetts Strong: Building a Blue Wall to Protect Our Liberties.

Members attended rallies in Boston and locally, organized by Common Cause, League of Women Voters, 50/51, and two postal unions. There are weekly standouts in Andover Thursdays 5:30 pm at South Church, and Saturdays in North Andover at the UU church at 11 am.

We scheduled our annual meeting for May 24, at Barbara's house 11:30 am -2 pm.

May 24 2025

Our annual meeting, at Barbara's house, was pleasant, and we heard about an environmental education organization, the Gulf of Maine Institute.

June 24, 2025

We planned for summer events: the Lowell Folk Festival, Hiroshima, and the Bread and Roses Festival.

We compared notes about various "No Kings" and other demonstrations we had attended individually.

Coming Events

Lowell Folk Festival, July 26, noon to 6.

Hiroshima Vigil at Andover Old Town Hall, 20 Main St. Wed. Aug 6 at 6:30 PM

Bread and Roses festival, Campagnone Common, 9/2, Mon. 9/1 noon to 6.

See the vigils list. Page 7

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

Membership

To continue to receive this newsletter...We Invite You to Join /Rejoin Us
.(Unless 2016 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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Return to
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, 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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<http://www.merrimackvalleypeopleforpeace.org/>

PEACE IS
PATRIOTIC

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, 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 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)
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/>

Representative Lori Trahan (District 3)
1616 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, DC
20515 202-225-3411
15 Union St, Suite 401, Lawrence, MA 01840
978 459-0101

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

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:
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>

State Bills
<http://www.mass.gov/legis/hbillsrch.htm>