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# Choosing Freedom from Fear

## Standing Up for the America We Believe In

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*“America, the richest and most powerful nation in the world, can well lead the way (in a) revolution of values. There is nothing, except a tragic death wish, to prevent us from reordering our priorities, so that the pursuit of peace will take precedence over the pursuit of war. These are the times for real choices and not false ones.” --Martin Luther King, 1967*

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All of us are inundated with images and messages that bathe us in fear. It has become the dominant, and numbing feature of our world. There is no doubt that we face many dangers. But living in fear is destructive personally and to our nation. The constant promotion of fear by all sides is driving policies and actions that have taken a toll on our nation's soul and institutions.

It is important for us to understand the fears we are being urged to accept. We need to learn to live in this environment, and to find a way to put the dangers we face in proper context for our personal and national lives and actions. It is important that we learn how to not let fear dominate our lives and country in a way that loses the moral center of who we are.

We are hearing messages of fear from all sides of the political spectrum, and can easily feel manipulated, disturbed and confused. As a rational and moral people, we have it within our power to ask our own questions about what kind of America, what kind of world we want to live in. We can demand that our government take action guided from a moral center that represents the best of our American ideals.

Women in Black Frederick mourns the devastating consequences of fear-based politics in our country. We mourn the violence that has resulted from how we have responded to fear. We seek ways forward to build a strong and lasting peace, based on non-violent change and justice for all. **We believe it is time to take a new approach to tackling the roots of global insecurity.** It is time to invest in building the world we want.

### ***Our Democracy Requires an Engaged Electorate!***

The future of democracy in the U.S. depends upon our informed, active participation. Well-informed voters, high voter participation, and elected officials who feel a strong sense of accountability to voters are key components of a healthy political system. Political candidates—whether incumbent or new—“listen louder” during campaigns than at any other times in their careers. We shouldn't miss this opportunity to speak our minds! It will be particularly important for us not to be swayed by the messages of fear, sent our way in order to gain our acceptance of the unacceptable: war, torture, abandonment of civil liberties and human needs. We will need to find ways to discern when candidates' records are distorted in fear-based attacks. We need to ask hard questions of all the candidates.

### **How Do We Get There From Here? Women in Black Frederick asks our candidates:**

#### **Supporting U.S. Troops by Bringing Them Home**

After half a trillion dollars, and almost 3000 U.S., 100,000 Iraqi lives lost we ask: ***What legislation did you support this year, or would you support to challenge the course of the failed war strategy in Iraq? Will you vote for a plan and timetable for the complete withdrawal of U.S. troops if elected?*** Congress is not supporting U.S. troops in Iraq by simply endorsing the failed occupation of that country. The latest National Intelligence Estimate, U.S. soldiers returning from Iraq, and some of the U.S. generals running the war argue the U.S. occupation of Iraq is fueling the insurgency and helping to recruit anti-U.S. extremists around the world. A majority of Iraqis, including many in the Iraqi government, want foreign troops out within a year.

#### **Supporting and Strengthening Nuclear Non-Proliferation Policy:**

**What policies and legislation will you support to make the nuclear non-proliferation policy of the US one that seeks to eliminate nuclear weapons at home and everywhere? Will you oppose funding and development of new nuclear weapons? Will you oppose any efforts to establish or implement a US nuclear first strike policy?** Current U.S. policy argues for maintaining thousands of nuclear weapons for the foreseeable future and nuclear weapons will continue to “play a critical role in the defense capabilities of the United States, its allies and friends.”



Additionally, U.S. policy promotes a more “flexible” role for nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons will no longer solely be used to deter a nuclear war but also to deal with multiple contingencies and new threats.

### **Making Sure There are No More Pre-emptive Wars**

**Will you support dialogue and diplomatic negotiations with Iran?** In the final hours of this congressional session the Senate passed the Iran Freedom Act of 2006 with no debate. This legislation imposes new unilateral sanctions on Iran, threatens to undermine the fragile international negotiations currently underway that would bring Iran into compliance with the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and further isolates the U.S. in the world community.

### **Investing in Peace**

**Will you vote to provide more money for non-military tools—such as diplomacy, community-based development and international institutions—to solve international problems before they lead to deadly violence?** A huge portion, about 95 percent, of what the U.S. spends to engage with the rest of the world is allocated to the military budget. A tiny amount, about five percent, is devoted to diplomacy, development, and supporting international institutions that can help to solve problems before they turn into wars. “....*A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death. If we do not act we shall surely be dragged down the long dark and shameful corridors of time reserved for those who possess power without compassion, might without morality, and strength without sight ....*” --MLK

### **Keeping People Safe at Home**

**How do you think the U.S. government should prioritize the federal budget to keep us all safe from the after-effects of natural disasters, from the effects of environmental degradation, from regional economic problems that cause widespread unemployment, and from the deprivations of poverty for those left out of the nation's economy?** Almost half of the federal budget pays for military responses to U.S. and global problems. Hurricane Katrina reminded all of us that not all threats to our safety are military threats. “.... *We are called to speak for the weak, for the voiceless, for victims of our nation and those it calls enemy, for no document from human hands can make these humans any less our brothers...*” MLK

### **Supporting Court Review of All Government Spying**

**Would you vote to halt this massive domestic spying program, and to require U.S. intelligence agencies to get warrants so that we have at least some assurance that they're focusing only on suspected terrorists or criminals?** In the name of national security, the Bush administration has tapped into information on phone calls made by some 200 million U.S. residents. This invasion of privacy is unprecedented.


### **Outlawing Torture Now, with No Exceptions**

**How did you or would you vote on the Military Commissions Act of 2006? And would you continue to work for legislation to abolish torture and the opportunity for torture -- without exceptions?** On 9/28 and 9/29 2006 Congress approved legislation that authorizes the president to order torture and abusive, humiliating treatment; permits indefinite detention of human beings without safeguards recognized as essential by U.S. law and treaty obligations; and transfers significant congressional power to the president. This legislation is morally reprehensible.

### **What you can do:**

- ◆ **VOTE!** For the candidates who reflect the vision of America you stand for. And hold those you elect accountable. Ask the candidates hard questions, and expect straight answers.
- ◆ Let our elected officials know your views. Contact: Contact Congressman Bartlett at: <http://www.bartlett.house.gov/> (202) 225-2721; (888) 297-8006. Senator Mikulski: <http://www.mikulski.senate.gov/mailform.html> (202) 224-4654
- ◆ Join in with others who promote a vision of America based on our highest ideals rather than fear. Two of many: Amnesty International: <http://www.amnestyusa.org/> Friends Committee on National Legislation: <http://www.fcnl.org/index.htm>

**“.... (People) do not easily assume the task of opposing their government's policy, especially in time of war.... Some of us...have found that the calling to speak is often...an agony, but we must speak.” --MLK**

 All around the world, Women In Black stand in silent vigil, wearing black as a symbol of mourning, for the ravages of war and violence. WIB is an international grassroots movement of women united in their commitment to peace, restorative justice, human rights and nonviolence. WIB vigils are now present in 40 countries, and in 38 US states. The vigils are a public statement that violence and oppression, under any label, are unacceptable. **Vigil Schedule:** All are welcome; please wear black. **Third Wednesday**, from 6:30 – 7 pm, and the **first Friday** of every month, 12 - 12:30 pm, both at intersection of Market and Patrick Streets in Frederick. For more information about Women in Black Frederick, MD. see [www.wibfrederick.org](http://www.wibfrederick.org) Email: [info@wibfrederick.org](mailto:info@wibfrederick.org) or call 301/834-7581.