

## Veterans Join Climate Strike with “Stop War, Save the Climate” Campaign

LANSING, MI

By James M. Rine. Ph.D.

Members of Veterans For Peace (VFP) joined with other Michigan peace groups to commemorate the global Fridays for Future Sept. 23<sup>rd</sup> climate strike by holding a demonstration at the Michigan State Capitol in Lansing. The main demand of the VFP led coalition was for the Federal government to increase funding to mitigate and adapt to the climate crisis and decrease funding to the already bloated military and its companion war industry. “Stop War, Save the Climate” was the theme of the event.



Veterans For Peace former President, Elliot Adams, speaking at the MI state capitol steps with other local peace group leaders. (Photo by Petra Dehar)

Under a clear blue sky on a crisp autumn morning the demonstration began at the capitol steps with comments from leaders of the coalition.

- “While the only current attacks on the U.S. homeland are by climate disasters, we are projected to spend 20 times more on our military than on climate action,” said **Jim Rine of Veterans for Peace and adjunct professor at Wayne State University**. “Senators Gary Peters and Debbie Stabenow have an obligation to save lives by changing spending priorities to work against the real and present danger of the climate crisis.”
- “The U.S. is projected to spend more on its nuclear forces alone between 2021 and 2030, than it is proposed to spend on climate in the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA),” **Rev. Rich Peacock of Michigan Peace Action**. “While the IRA is a good step, a better step would be for leaders in Washington, D.C. to shift money from imagined threats to real threats, lessening the climate crisis and building toward climate resilience.”

- **Bob Barnhart President of the Greater Lansing United Nations Association** said, “How is it that the U.S. can devote hundreds of billions to the war industry but only fulfill a tenth of what Biden promised to the desperately necessary UN Green Climate Fund (\$11.4 Billion)? We need our senators to help shift priorities.”
- “The U.S. could half its war budget and still spend more than any other nation,” added **Elliot Adams, Viet Nam veteran and past national president of Veterans for Peace**. “The amount of money we’re handing over to defense contractors isn’t based on need and should be spent changing our energy system and protecting ourselves against the record storms, fires and floods brought on by the climate crisis.”
- **Terry Link, founder of the Michigan Peace Alliance**, summed up the comments with a quote from President Eisenhower, “Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the vital sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.”

The protest moved to the intersection on the east side of the capitol building where veterans Jim Rine and Elliot Adams blocked traffic until motorcycle police arrived and encircled them.



Lansing Police warning Veterans For Peace member, Jim Rine, he will be arrested if they do not leave the street. (Photo by Petra Dehar)

The VFP organizer of the demonstration, Jim Rine, told the arresting officer “For years I’ve written papers and I’ve lobbied Congress to no avail. Now I feel acts of civil disobedience are needed to wake the public up to the dangers of the climate crisis.”

After the arrests, the demonstrators marched to the office of Senator Peters, who sits on the Senate Armed Services Committee responsible for proposing military budgets, and delivered a letter outlining the group’s demands relating to climate change and U.S. militarism.

The event was also part of the international Fridays for Future climate strike events, which were started by the Swedish activist, Greta Thunberg (<https://fridaysforfuture.org/september23/>).



Organization leaders outside Lansing building containing the office of Sen. Gary Peters. (Photo by Petra Dehar)



Terry Link of Michigan Peace Alliance delivering protest letter to Sen. Peter's staff in Lansing. (Photo by Petra Dehar)



Sept. 23, 2022

Senator Gary Peters:  
124 West Allegan Street Suite 1400  
Lansing, MI 48933

Subject: Reduce U.S. Military Funding and Reallocate Monies for Climate and Social Welfare

Dear Senator Gary Peters:

Following our meeting of 6 September, we again urge you to support reduced funding of the FY 2023 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to the level originally requested by President Biden. Why? There are much more important needs of our fellow citizens, such as fighting the climate crisis, instituting universal healthcare, and increasing spending on education. Plus, the Pentagon budget could be halved, and the US would still spend more on it's military than any other nation.

We thank you for supporting the "*Inflation Reduction Act of 2022*," but point out the bill's \$737 billion over TEN years, is less than the House's version of the NDAA's \$838.8 billion funding for ONE year. In addition, the \$369 billion energy and climate portion of the *Inflation Reduction Act* allocates far less than the US is projected to spend on its nuclear forces alone between 2021 and 2030. As of 2021, the US spends more on its military than at least the next ten countries combined, twelve times more than Russia and nearly three times more than China.

The disproportionate spending by the US on its military does not lead to trusting relationships with other nations. Instead of continuing to throw money at our already bloated military and its contractors, Congress should work to fulfill President Biden's promise of \$11.4 billion annually to help developing countries mitigate and adapt to the worsening climate crisis. If the US finally fulfilled its commitments to this funding, it would help grow international cooperation at COP27 in November by demonstrating the US is more interested in saving our planet than ruling over it.

Finally, regarding the war in Ukraine, while the U.S. announces more aid in the billions for the Ukrainian resistance to Russian aggression, we should also be pushing to end the protracted war with negotiations. The United Nations reinforced the Minsk II agreement of 2015 so it could be the mediator. Although Ukrainians and Europeans are sacrificing bravely, they need a ceasefire and diplomacy to end the war. While this war rages on, the world cannot adequately address the climate crisis.

Respectfully,

List of endorsing organizations:

Peace Education Center	Peace Action of Michigan
Greater Lansing United Nations Association	Veterans For Peace Chapter 74
Kalamazoo Nonviolent Opponents to War	Veterans For Peace Chapter 93
Michigan Peace Alliance	VFP   Climate Crisis & Militarism Project
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (Detroit chapter)	

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Letter delivered to Senator Gary Peter's (D-MI) Lansing office after the protest.

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