

MARYLAND UNITED FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE, INC.
NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2005

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Note: All opinions expressed in this publication are those solely of their authors and do not necessarily reflect those of MUPJ and/or its members...as usual! Many thanks to Carol Solomon, Ron Solomon, and Paulette Hammond for helping with this issue.

Highlights of 3-13-05 Coordinating Body Meeting

March 13 the Coordinating Body of MUPJ met at the Peace Resource Center, 4 E. Church Street, in Frederick.

Peace Conference 2005:

Handicap parking: Helen will talk to the city to make sure we have this. There is a parking lot next to the church, \$1 all day, but we're hoping for a few spots right on the street.

The Mayor will welcome us to Frederick. Dan will ask her to be here at 8:30 am. He will also find out about the City Council issuing a proclamation. Ron will email Dan about it.

Action sessions (morning): the goal of these is to organize, not inform. Carol has one facilitator, Amy Quinn from IPS. Gus said he could get facilitators and we will also need notetakers; we will need four more facilitators and seven notetakers.

New Business

US Senate campaign: Sarbanes is leaving, what can we do? Endorse the best candidate, based on a questionnaire.

I Do in Maryland: We ratified the e-mail vote to endorse the I Do in Maryland campaign, a coalition of organizations working to ensure that same sex couples have the same protections and safeguards as married couples. They are supporting a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the state's marriage law, and against a proposed constitutional amendment denying gay people marriage and other family rights. For more info, check out their website at: www.IDoinMaryland.org.



20TH ANNUAL MUPJ CONFERENCE
"War Is Not the Answer. What Is?"

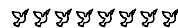
Saturday, April 30 Evangelical Lutheran Church, Frederick Historic District.

As usual, we will have a pot luck supper 4/30 to chat, network informally, and help set up for the conference the next day.

The morning sessions will focus on action items with a knowledgeable person, a facilitator, and a note-taker to take down the roster of attendees, and report back to the plenary session on suggested actions. We will include the info in the next newsletter which will be mailed to all attendees. We are hoping to carry out action(s) suggested. The action sessions will be:

- US Out of Iraq
- Nuclear Weapons
- Peace in the Middle East
- Fort Detrick
- National Legislation
- Peace Parade
- State Legislation
- Nonviolence action

If you need brochure(s), contact Carol: 410-363-3140, peacepepper@comcast.net



Financial Risk for State of Maryland
Key Issue for ICC

Financing the construction of the InterCounty Connector (ICC) anticipates a combination of bonds backed by future federal funding and projected revenue sources. The bonds to be used are called GARVEE (Grant Anticipation Revenue Vehicle) and are tax-exempt debt instrument financing mechanisms backed by annual federal appropriations for federal-aid transportation projects.

In the past, virtually all of Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) financial assistance took the form of reimbursing states on a "pay-as-you-go" basis for the federal share (generally 80 percent) of construction costs. Under this approach, the states would draw down obligated federal funds as monthly contractor invoice payments were presented during the construction period. With each payment, the states would meet the typical 20-percent matching requirement from their state highway fund or other non-federal sources. However, as project sizes have grown, states have found it increasingly difficult to fund major capital investments in this fashion without displacing their smaller, ongoing improvement projects.

GARVEE uses a "pay-as-you-use" approach. The bonds are issued with the risk that future federal highway funds and tolls from ICC would be adequate to repay these financial instruments. Higher risk means a higher interest rate. Reducing the risk can mean lower interest rates. In some cases, the backing of the bond issue has been "double-barreled," with the state pledging either its full faith and credit or state highway funds. In other cases the bond issue has been structured as a stand-alone credit with no state backstop (the so-called "naked GARVEEs"), insulating the state's general credit from the financing.

The ICC GARVEE bonds proposed by the Ehrlich administration and the MD Dept. of Transportation (MDOT)—SB 75 and HB 1352, will not be using a state backstop. In addition, two bond rating agencies have advised that GARVEE bonds are debt for the State of Maryland and need to be included in the State's debt limit calculations.

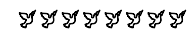
The issuance of \$1 billion in naked GARVEE bonds by Maryland would be the largest

issuance to date in the U.S. and the largest use of GARVEE bonds for one project in the U.S. Even California with its vast land and highway expenses has borrowed far less (\$625 million) in stand-alone GARVEE bonds than MDOT's proposed \$1 billion.

The risk for Maryland is more than financial – the risk is limited choices. A lower bond rating for Maryland due to risky financing will mean higher debt service costs for all financial instruments. School construction needs to accommodate a growing population and economy will be delayed. Transportation infrastructure replacements and upgrades will be delayed. Smaller community upgrades on the transportation needs list will be left out of future funding. Already public transit needs in Baltimore are being unmet and unfunded.

The legislation to raise the limit on the amount of GARVEE (and especially GARVEE without a backstop) will have an effect on Maryland's future. Increasing the GARVEE limit puts pressure on the state's overall debt ceiling, and leaves Maryland citizens with such heavy payments that decisions on how to meet our needs become far more burdensome. The risk for Maryland is too high.

For more of the gory details, check out the fiscal and policy note prepared by the Department of Legislative Services for SB 75 at: http://mlis.state.md.us/2005rs/fnotes/bil_0005/s_b0075.pdf. Call or write your state senator, especially if (s)he is on the Budget & Taxation Committee. The House Bill has already received a favorable vote from the Appropriations Committee.



How Latin America Turned to the Left

By Rupert Cornwell

Uruguay Swears In Its First Left-Wing President Today, Joined By The New Wave Of Leaders In The Region - And Fidel Castro; The Event Symbolizes Waning US Influence

At presidential inaugurations, as at weddings, the guest list says everything. In Montevideo today, Tabare Vazquez will be sworn in as the first left-wing president in the 170-year history of Uruguay. That is noteworthy enough, but even more remarkable are the foreign dignitaries in attendance Luis Inacio "Lula" da Silva, the center-left President of Brazil will be there. So will Hugo Chavez, the fiery demagogue who leads Venezuela, and Argentina's Nestor Kirchner. Adding the revolutionary topping will be none other than Fidel Castro. No gathering could better symbolize the slow drift of Latin America out of the US orbit.

Until 31 October, Uruguay could be counted upon as one of Washington's staunchest friends in the hemisphere. But then Mr Vazquez, an oncologist and former mayor of Montevideo, broke the traditional two-party mold of Uruguayan politics by leading the Frente Amplio (Broad Front) leftist coalition to an overwhelming election victory.

Today Washington's unqualified, 100 per cent loyal allies to the south of its border with Mexico are no more than one or two - El Salvador and Honduras certainly, but who else? Even Chile defied the superpower by refusing to support the 2003 invasion of Iraq, a slight not yet entirely forgotten in Washington.

Instead, a de facto center-left bloc is emerging across the continent. Its members vary greatly from Chile, the economic poster-boy, to Washington's bugbear Venezuela. One thing, however, they have in common. They may not be necessarily opposed to the US on every issue, but they are no longer beholden to it.

Their drift away is testament to an historic failure of American foreign policy. In recent years the US approach to Latin America has been hopelessly distorted by its fixation with one modest-sized island 90 miles south of the Florida Keys. In economic and military terms Cuba is of little significance, but its symbolic importance has been vastly magnified by the attentions lavished upon it by Washington.

Isolation has been the watchword - first of President Castro, and now of another regional "bad boy" in the person of Mr Chavez. But the strategy has backfired utterly. American bullying has given the Cuban leader a nationalist support he might never have had otherwise, consolidating his position as the longest-serving government leader on the planet.

The US has bullied Mr Chavez too, clumsily backing a failed coup against him in 2002, and subsequently criticizing him at every turn. Today, boosted by his state's surging oil wealth, Mr Chavez is more assertive than ever. "Washington is planning my death," he claims, using Mr Castro's tactics to mobilize supporters against an external foe.

Once upon a time, the US tried to understand Latin America. In the 1930s, Franklin Roosevelt and his top Latin American adviser, Sumner Welles, realized that US military interventions in Cuba and elsewhere were counterproductive. Instead they devised the "Good Neighbor Policy". Two decades later, John Kennedy proclaimed the Alianza para el Progreso (the Alliance for Progress).

Since then, however, US diplomacy has been back-handed in the extreme. Its illogical obsession with Cuba, its insistence on seeing the world through a single prism - first the struggle with communism, then the spread of free markets and free trade, now the "war on terror" - have blinded it to the sensitivities of the region. During the Cold War, Washington backed an array of unpleasant military dictators as bastions against Soviet power. Later, the US insistence on rigorous fiscal policies (which it conspicuously fails to impose on itself) is widely blamed for a string of financial crises, culminating in the near-collapse of Argentina's economy in 2002.

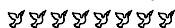
"The US has suffered defeats on every front," says Larry Birns, director of the Council on Hemispheric Affairs in Washington. "The fact is that Latin America is no longer 'hemisphere-bound', just a handful of countries in America's back-yard." Today President Castro is probably in a stronger position in the region than ever before. Both Brazil's Lula and Uruguay's Vazquez were elected on left-wing platforms, but are economic realists. Closer ties with Cuba allow them to burnish their left-wing credentials and prove their independence from the US, sweetening harsh economic medicine at home.

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Tuesday, March 1, 2005, [Independent/UK](#)



Our Battered Constitution

By Bob Herbert, ©New York Times

The Constitution? Forget about it.

Only about half of America's high school students think newspapers should be allowed to publish freely, without government approval of their stories. And a third say the free speech guarantees of the First Amendment go "too far."

This has thrown a lot of noses out of joint. Hodding Carter III, president of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, which financed a two-year study of high school attitudes about First Amendment freedoms, said, "These results are not only disturbing - they are dangerous." But maybe we shouldn't be so hard on the youngsters. After all, they've been set a terrible example by a presidential administration that has left no doubt about its contempt for a number of our supposedly most cherished constitutional guarantees.

In an important decision, a federal judge in Washington ruled that the Bush administration cannot be allowed to defy the Constitution and an order of the Supreme Court in its treatment of the hundreds of prisoners it is holding at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. The judge, Joyce Hens Green, said the administration must permit the detainees it is holding as "enemy combatants" to challenge their detention in federal courts.

The administration has tried mightily to establish its right to treat anyone who it determines is an enemy combatant" any way it chooses. It has argued that it can hold such detainees for a lifetime - without charging them, without giving them access to lawyers, without showing them the evidence against them and without allowing them to challenge their detention.

Administration officials are adamant on this matter, and yesterday they were granted a stay of Judge Green's decision, pending an appeal.

The Supreme Court ruled last June that the administration was acting illegally in depriving the detainees of their liberty without allowing them to challenge the cases against them. The

administration responded bizarrely. Its lawyers argued, with "Alice in Wonderland" logic, that, yes, in accordance with the Supreme Court's ruling, the detainees can challenge their detention. But since (in the administration's view) they don't actually possess any rights to support the challenges, the courts must necessarily reject the challenges.

The administration is fighting for nothing less than the death of due process for anyone it rounds up, no matter how arbitrarily, in its enemy combatant sweeps. Such tyrannical powers should offend anyone who cares about such old-fashioned notions as the rule of law, checks and balances, and constitutional guarantees.

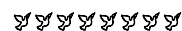
Under the procedures set up by the administration for dealing with the detainees, we have no way of distinguishing between a terrorist committed to mass murder and someone who is completely innocent.

In her decision, Judge Green wrote, "Although this nation unquestionably must take strong action under the leadership of the commander in chief to protect itself against enormous and unprecedented threats, that necessity cannot negate the existence of the most basic fundamental rights for which the people of this country have fought and died for well over 200 years."

The fundamental right in the case of the Guantánamo detainees is the right not to be deprived of liberty without due process of law. A government with the power to spirit people away and declare that's the end of the matter is exactly the kind of government the United States has always claimed to oppose, and has sometimes fought. For the United States itself to become that kind of government is spectacularly scary.

In seeking the stay of Judge Green's ruling, the administration showed yesterday that it is committed to being that kind of government. Barbara Olshansky, a lawyer with the Center for Constitutional Rights, which has filed legal challenges on behalf of many detainees, said the administration believes it has "carte blanche" when it comes to fighting terror: "It's pretty alarming."

In one hearing that led up to the decision, Judge Green attempted to see how broadly the government viewed its power to hold detainees. Administration lawyers told her, in response to a hypothetical question, that they believed the president would even have the right to lock up "a little old lady from Switzerland" for the duration of the war on terror if she had written checks to a charity that she believed helped orphans, but that actually was a front for Al Qaeda.



WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS FOR THE PEACE COMMUNITY?

There have been many ideas concerning next steps for the peace community. We have gathered some of these together to give ideas about what's next. One issue disturbing to me is whether we should withdraw immediately from Iraq or follow a planned withdrawal strategy.

Kofi Annan has called for an expanded Security Council, fixed rules for when nations could go to war, strengthened human rights and boosted development and trade, as well as an

overhaul of the UN bureaucracy. From **Faithful America**, alerts@faithfulamerica.org Using a wonderfully powerful collaborative tool called "synanim" you will be able to actually help craft this document with hundreds of thousands of others in REAL TIME - a statement that will embody the depth and thoughtfulness of peace-loving people across this nation.

This is not a petition or chat room, but is your opportunity to share your commitment to non-violence and justice with others and to create a common Declaration called Peace Not Poverty.

REGISTER to participate in this online event by 3/27 at www.peacenotpoverty.org.

From **United for Peace & Justice**: Info lak@unitedforpeace.org

OPPOSING THE USE OF THE NATIONAL GUARD IN IRAQ

A campaign of state-by-state local organizing and action focuses on the deployment of the National Guard. Tactics will include local resolutions, referenda, and hearings before state legislatures and other local/state political bodies on the local impacts of the war in Iraq. This organizing is designed to highlight the many local costs of the war and build local/state-based pressure to oppose the use of the National Guard in the Iraq War.

CLERGY AND LAITY CONCERNED ABOUT IRAQ

Campaign extends and strengthen antiwar work with faith-based institutions, leaders, and communities. The campaign will include support for Clergy and Laity Concerned about Iraq; organizing or co-sponsoring a series of faith-based activities; and highlighting the moral bankruptcy of the war through printed materials, website content, and email alerts.

HIGHLIGHTING THE LOCAL COSTS OF THE WAR

A community-based education and direct action campaign raises awareness of the indirect costs of the war in Iraq as reflected in reduced funding for basic human needs in our communities. Antiwar activists will create alliances with local groups whose programs are facing cuts or closure, in order both to save the programs and educate the public about the impact of the war on their local community.

PRESSURING CONGRESS & ELECTED OFFICIALS TO BRING THE TROOPS HOME

A campaign of street protests, sit-ins, face-to-face lobbying, call-in days, and other actions to pressure Congress and other elected officials to oppose the war in Iraq. A working group will be formed to design and carry out this campaign, developing creative materials to assist member groups in this work, sharing relevant information, and coordinating with ally organizations that do legislative work.

SEPTEMBER MOBILIZATION AGAINST THE WAR

A major grassroots mobilization in New York City to demonstrate the breadth and depth of U.S. popular opposition to the Iraq War, on the occasion of the 60th

anniversary of the United Nations and the Millennium+5 Summit, which will bring heads of state to New York City.

From **Friends Committee on National Legislation** Join FCNL's Iraq Campaign, <http://www.fcnl.org/iraq/index.htm>

Urge Congress to declare the U.S. has no imperial ambitions in Iraq. Many members of Congress are still unwilling to take even this first step to define U.S. policy toward Iraq. The President's request for \$61 billion in supplemental funding for the war in Iraq (which is part of a larger \$81.9 billion supplemental funding bill) is now being debated in the House of Representatives. In the coming weeks, FCNL will be encouraging concerned citizens to contact their representatives and urge them to attach a resolution to the Iraq war spending bill that states that the policy of the United States is to "withdraw all military troops and bases from Iraq."

The **Lost Cost of War** campaign, designed to connect the dots between billions spent on war and cuts in vital social services. The website www.nationalpriorities.org gives national, state and city breakdowns of what taxpayers are spending on this war, and what COULD BE purchased with that money. Info: www.codepinkalert.org, info@codepinkalert.org

From Ralph Nader--

"Dear Member of Congress,

According to a Harris poll last month, 59 percent of Americans want U.S. troops brought home within the next year. We are among them. You are not listening to us. Here is what we propose: To meet with you in a public auditorium with the media invited on [insert date], when you say you will back in your state [or district]. We wish to discuss specifically with you the following issues:

1. Do you support continued funding of the Iraq War and occupation without a specific exit strategy and timetable?

2. Will you announce an exit strategy for Iraq?

3. Will you investigate contracting abuses found by DoD auditors regarding the reconstruction of Iraq?

4. Will you investigate the \$9 billion dollars unaccounted for in the Coalition Provisional Authority budget in Iraq?

5. How will you hold President Bush accountable?

If we do not hear favorably from you within a week of your receipt of this e-mail [or letter or fax], we will double the number of signatures and renew the request."

If one week later we do not hear from you, we will again double the number of signatures and visit your local office so you and your staff can meet your constituents.

If a week later we do not hear from you, we will peacefully and diligently march in front of your local office to secure your attention.

You have often said how much you enjoy hearing from your constituents - well, here we are. Please do not take this as a hostile message; rather, it is an effort to indicate to you the urgency we place on ending the occupation of Iraq and bringing U.S. troops home as soon as possible. Civilians, children, and soldiers are dying or being seriously injured every day.

In the meantime, we would appreciate answers to the following questions:

1. Do you have a summary of Paul Bremer's vast directives, which are still the governing authority of Iraq? These include extending

Saddam's ban on trade-union organizing and allowing a U.S. takeover of Iraqi businesses.

2. Have you protested to President Bush and Secretary Rumsfeld that they do not officially disclose the injuries, diseases, and severe mental trauma suffered by our troops when they do not occur in combat situations - even if the soldiers are evacuated from Iraq? If yes, send us a copy of your letter. If not, why not?

3. Will you sign a simple pledge that henceforth you will vote against any attack on another nation unless Congress itself declares war as required by the U.S. Constitution? See: The United States Constitution's War Powers Clause, Article 1, Section 8, Clause 11.

4. Finally, would you propose a very selective service draft just for the children of members of Congress? The purpose of this request is that such a draft will focus the attention of Congress on the realistic risks and consequences of initiating hostilities. www.objector.org

Another idea from **Counter-recruitment movement**

Join the Counter-recruitment movement. Efforts to get military recruiters off high schools and campuses, or to counter the recruiters false advertising with the truth and with non-military career/school options for young people. There are also campaigns to **support conscientious objectors** in the military who are refusing to fight in Iraq. Info www.afsc.org or www.objector.org.

From **Kevin Zeese** <http://DemocracyRising.US>

Weakness is being shown in recruitment of troops. If the U.S. does not have enough troops they will not be able to carry out the war. Unless there is another terrorist attack on U.S. soil the draft will be too unpopular for them to bring back.

BRING THE NATIONAL GUARD HOME!

With one-third of the troops in Iraq coming from the National Guard, there has been more & more questioning of the misuse of a state militia was created to protect Americans at home, not to fight in overseas wars. In Vermont this month, 49 towns passed resolutions asking their state legislators to investigate the use of the Vermont National Guard in Iraq, and calling on the president and Congress to "take steps to withdraw American troops from Iraq." In Montana, the governor has asked that the Montana Guard come home. It's time to get this campaign going in all states. Info www.mfso.org

BUILD AN ARMY TO STOP THE WAR

Democracy Rising's 'Stop the War' campaign is building a grass roots base that will focus its attention on the decision makers in, DC. Help us build a base that is not only heard, but cannot be ignored. We can end the war is we act together to do so. Send this Alert today to people you know - friends, colleagues, family - post it to discussion groups. Use our e-postcard function to send people a postcard with a photo of the Iraq War or protests against the Iraq War - let people see the ugliness of the war and the power of protest - get them engaged and involved. Info www.democracyrising.us/component/option,com_wrapper/Itemid,38

What Now (and What's New) For The Peace Movement? By Amy Quinn

United for Peace and Justice at their meeting in St. Louis decided to support & amplify the pressure coming from within the ranks of the

military. Military families and veterans hold the moral authority to successfully communicate with the U.S. public the reality on the ground in Iraq and the disillusion soldiers are facing. Iraq War veterans and military families need help putting a human face on the 1,500 soldiers who have been sent to their graves and the thousands more who are suffering the physical and mental scars of war. It's also crucial to expose how the war has dangerously overextended the U.S. military, the National Guard and our military reserve units.

We must seize on Bush's greatest vulnerability-- the war's astronomical cost, set to surpass \$200 billion in the coming weeks. Bush's mounting deficit from reckless war spending is already squeezing out community programs that serve millions.

We must expose the hypocrisy of Bush's war of liberation & present viable alternatives to promote genuine democracy and economic sovereignty in Iraq.

Please sign **PROGRESSIVE DEMOCRATS OF AMERICA's** Defense and Security Petition

We, the undersigned, believe that America's long term domestic & national security needs will be best served by adherence to the international rule of law, through transition to a more collaborative model of defense that emphasizes nonviolent alternatives to war, and by challenging other nations to join us in a redirection of a substantial portion of the world's current astronomical levels of military spending toward:

The elimination of poverty and preventable, treatable disease;

The realization of fair trade through the globalization of worker safety, labor rights, environmental protection, and tax policy;

The development of healthy, sustainable economies through industrial policies promoting meaningful employment, environmental restoration, and increased local self-reliance;

Effective funding for programs that support human needs: social security, universal health care, and education;

The ending all forms of invidious discrimination and the rapid response to genocide;

The enhancement of multilateral dispute resolution processes and peacekeeping forces; and

The building of cooperative rather than competitive relationships with the community of nations.

We believe the US War and Occupation of Iraq was conducted principally for oil and geopolitical power, not "democracy" for Iraq; that the war was based on lies about weapons of mass destruction and a non-existent working relationship between Sadaam Hussein and Al Queda; and that the US is now in the process of building permanent military bases in Iraq.

We assert that the continued U.S. occupation:

Breeds resentment and terrorism in Iraq and throughout the Muslim world;

Exact an unacceptable toll on American soldiers, National Guard, civilians, families, and U.S. military readiness;

Exact an unacceptable toll on Iraqi children, women and men; and

Is exacting an unacceptably heavy toll on America's reputation in the world.

We, therefore, urge that the United States government take immediate responsibility for its actions by:

Immediately and completely withdrawing US troops from Iraq;

Transferring peace keeping responsibility in Iraq to the United Nations;

Providing economic support to the United Nations for the conduct of peacekeeping missions; and reconstruction of Iraq to a future legitimate Iraqi government.

We the undersigned will work together to see the United States lead the way to a 50% global military budget cut over the next Providing sufficient funds for the decade, and toward the redirection of those funds towards efforts that will more effectively serve domestic and national security needs of all people and all nations.



Energy Dept. Oversight by EPA or NRC

Washington - The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) issued a report today concluding that the Department of Energy cannot regulate itself when disposing of highly radioactive waste or shut out state authorities and the public in the decision-making process. The report should prompt Congress to block DOE from abandoning high-level waste in tanks at three sites, force the agency to establish an open, public process when addressing waste disposal issues, and give the EPA the responsibility to oversee DOE waste disposal activities, according to NRDC (Natural Resource Defense Council).

The NAS study stemmed from a controversy triggered when the DOE

granted itself the authority to reclassify millions of gallons of highly radioactive waste as "incidental" waste, enabling it to leave it in tanks at facilities in Washington state, South Carolina and Idaho, instead of moving it to a permanent underground repository. NRDC and others sued to stop the agency from abandoning the waste, but last fall Congress granted DOE the authority to reclassify - and therefore unilaterally dispose of - high-level waste in South Carolina and Idaho, but not in Washington or any other state.

"By calling for direct external regulation over DOE's unilateral, ad hoc process of radioactive waste reclassification, the National Academy of Sciences has clearly sent a message that Congress must rein in DOE and address the mess that it has made of nuclear waste cleanup policy," said Geoff Fettus, the NRDC attorney who handled the case.

DOE is responsible for cleaning up 253 massive underground tanks containing approximately 100 million gallons of liquid and sludge high-level radioactive waste. ...In 1999, DOE awarded itself the authority to reclassify the high-level nuclear waste in the tanks as "incidental waste," allowing it to apply a substantially less protective standard of cleanup. NRDC and its co-plaintiffs sued, maintaining that DOE is required by the Nuclear Waste Policy Act to dispose of its high-level radioactive waste in a geologic repository. To leave the waste in the tanks and covered in concrete would ensure the waste will eventually leach into the groundwater adjacent to Columbia River in Washington, the

Snake River Aquifer in Idaho, and literally into the water table at the Savannah River site.

In July 2003, the chief federal district judge in Idaho ruled that DOE's reclassification scheme was unlawful. The court ruling prohibited DOE from arbitrarily "reclassifying" high-level radioactive waste as "waste incidental to reprocessing" and abandoning it beneath a layer of grout in corroding tanks. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit found that the matter was not yet "ripe" for decision by a court, so the lower court's decision was reversed. However, the underlying dispute remains active and likely to be litigated soon.

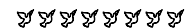
Congress Amends Nuclear Cleanup Laws without Hearing or Debate

In 2004, in a controversial rewrite of longstanding nuclear waste policy, Congress (by the narrowest of margins) approved an amendment to the Nuclear Waste Policy Act to allow DOE the authority to reclassify and abandon high-level radioactive waste in aging, corroding underground storage tanks next to the Savannah River in South Carolina and above the Snake River Aquifer in Idaho. Inserted into the fiscal year 2005 defense authorization bill without any public hearing or debate, this provision

(1) exempted DOE from complying with the requirements of the Nuclear Waste Policy Act in South Carolina and Idaho;

(2) overturned the Idaho federal court ruling that DOE may not arbitrarily and unilaterally reclassify high-level radioactive waste; and

(3) allowed DOE sole discretion in deciding what is high-level radioactive waste in South Carolina.



Holt Bill (HB 550) for Verified Voting

There are two verified voting bills have been introduced. The Holt bill HB 550, is the gold standard for e-voting and has Verified Voting's strongest support.

While you are reading this, many states, counties, and towns are rushing to buy unreliable, unverifiable paperless touchscreen voting machines. They are poised to spend more than a billion dollars of taxpayer funds on machines that cannot provide a reliable recount or an accurate audit. Unless you act now, tens of thousands of these paperless e-voting machines will be coming to precincts across the country within the next few months.

Voter-verified paper ballots make it possible for voters to verify their votes are recorded as intended and for election officials to conduct meaningful recounts and audits. VVPBs also make it possible to recover from e-voting machine malfunctions, such as those experienced last year in California, Georgia, North Carolina, and elsewhere, without having to re-run a costly election from scratch.

ONLY a law requiring VVPBs will halt the ongoing purchase of paperless e-voting machines nationwide.

Take action:

Urge your representative to co-sponsor Rep. Holt's **gold standard** "Voter Confidence and Increased Accessibility Act" (H.R. 550) and Rep. Gibbons' "Voting Integrity and Verification Act" (VIVA, H.R. 704).

Visit the Action Center today at http://hq.demaction.org/dia/organizations/vevo/campaign.jsp?campaign_KEY=395