

Veterans For Peace 2016 Proposed By-Law Amendments

2016 BL-1

Bylaw amendment change proposed by Tarak Kauff, Chapter 58 845-706-0187 tkauff@gmail.com, endorsed by Ray McGovern, Ann Wright, Doug Rawlings, Bill Earhart, Michael Uhl, Mike Ferner, Paul Appell

ARTICLE II. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

We, ~~having dutifully served our nation~~ **as military veterans**, do hereby affirm our greater responsibility to serve the cause of world peace. To this end we will work, with others **both nationally and internationally**

1. To increase public awareness of the **causes and** costs of war
2. To restrain our governments from intervening, overtly and covertly, in the internal affairs of other nations
3. To end the arms race and to reduce and eventually eliminate nuclear weapons
4. To seek justice for veterans and victims of war
5. To abolish war as an instrument of national policy.

To achieve these goals, members of Veterans For Peace pledge to use non-violent means and to maintain an organization that is both democratic and open with the understanding that all members are trusted to act in the best interests of the group for the larger purpose of world peace.

Rationale:

The submitters feel the Statement of Purpose can and should be more inclusive of those veterans who do not consider or wish to be labeled as having “served dutifully,” more inclusive of veterans who might have deserted rather than take part in war, of those who were drafted or went in against their will, or as in some countries actually forced to be in the military, of those who rebelled while in the military, of those who received dishonorable or bad conduct discharges, all of whom now, as members of VFP, serve the greater cause of world peace.

These small changes would make the Statement inclusive of all who are military veterans, dutifully served or not. The changes would also make the statement more universally applicable to veterans of all nations and not exclusively U.S. centric. The Statement would still cover those that are proud of their time in the military and who do feel they have dutifully served.

2016 BL-2

Bylaw amendment change proposed by Joey King, Chapter 89, 615-485-1616
jbkranger@aol.com

ARTICLE II. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

We, having dutifully served our nation, do hereby affirm our greater responsibility to serve the cause of world peace. To this end we will work, with others

6. To increase public awareness of the costs of war
7. To restrain our government from intervening, overtly and covertly, in the internal affairs of other nations
8. To end the arms race and to reduce and eventually eliminate nuclear weapons
9. To seek justice for veterans and victims of war
10. To abolish war as an instrument of national policy.

To achieve these goals, members of Veterans For Peace pledge to use non-violent means and ~~to~~ **support organizations who use non-violent means**, while maintaining an organization that is both democratic and open with the understanding that all members are trusted to act in the best interests of the group for the larger purpose of world peace.

Note that if the other change in the Statement of Purpose passes and this passes then the two must be combined.

Rationale:

First; in the last 7 years several world events have erupted and subsequent debates have ensued both on the board of directors and in chat rooms about how VFP should respond. Sometimes, individuals have advocated supporting causes, groups, tactics, or strategies that are violent. As justification, it has been cited that VFP's Statement of Purpose prohibits us from using violence, but does not prohibit us from supporting violent groups abroad. I think this is hypocritical on at least 3 fronts:

A) It is implied from the overall tenor of the SOP that we, having served our respective governments in the military, have experienced the use of violence as a tactic and have seen the senselessness of it. Why would we advocate the use of violence by others?

B) Now that we are an international organization, we may someday have a chapter in a country where civil unrest is occurring. It would put a non-US chapter in an uncomfortable situation to have the international office in St Louis supporting violence and local chapter supporting non-violence.

C) The rest of the world would find VFP hypocritical in if it became public knowledge that we were supporting violence outside the US, but supporting nonviolence for ourselves.

Second; the book, " Why Civil Resistance Works," is the only book which has empirically studied the tactical use of non-violent tactics/strategies vs. violent tactics/strategies. The book has been peer-reviewed. It studied 323 world-wide revolutions, social movements etc., from 1900-2006. The long and short of the research found that while neither was 100% effective, non-violence was twice as effective as violence. So, to support the use of violence tactics is unproductive.

Third, supporting violent groups, tactics, strategies abroad could land VFP in serious legal trouble. What if VFP supported a group that was internationally recognized as a terrorist organization? To agree with a cause is one thing, to support violence in the name of that cause is quite another.

Fourth; this proposed bylaws change does not prohibit individual VFP members from supporting violent causes abroad. It merely clarifies the organization's commitment to international non-violence. This is especially vital now that we are an international organization.

2016 BL-3

Bylaw amendment change proposed by Barry Ladendorf, Chapter 91, 619-997-2772
bdlvfp@gmail.com

ARTICLE III. MEMBERSHIP

Section 5. Restrict or expel from membership

The Board of Directors has the authority to ~~restrict~~ **deny** or expel from membership a person when, in ~~their~~ **its** judgment, admission **or continued membership** would be inconsistent with the purposes, principles, objectives or goals and ideals of VFP. The Board of Directors shall ~~state their~~ **inform the membership at the Annual Convention of its** reasons for **taking** any action under this Section ~~to the Annual Convention~~. Any action under this Section may be appealed to the **membership at the Annual national** Convention.

Rationale:

Article III, Section 5 currently gives authority to the Board of Directors to restrict or expel from membership a person when in the judgment of the Board the "admission" of a potential member would be inconsistent with the purposes, principles goals and ideals of VFP. Section 5 appears to imply other action may be taken against a current VFP member. The language of the Section, however, is ambiguous

Bylaw amendment change, proposed by Bylaws Committee:
Nate Goldshlag, Chapter 9. 617-548-3588 nateg@pobox.com
Gene Marx, Chapter 111, 253-738-8462 ejmarx2@gmail.com
Tom Palumbo, Chapter 979, 828-335-3627 tomvfp@gmail.com

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ARTICLE X. MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Section 4(d). Resolutions

Associate Members shall have the right to submit resolutions for consideration and vote by ~~Full Members~~.

Rationale:

When voting by associate members was instituted, Section 3 of this article was changed to reflect this. But the bylaws committee and the Board at the time overlooked the fact that section 4(d) contradicts Section 3, which allows resolution voting by associate members. This change, which should be completely non-controversial, fixes this error.

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Bylaw amendment change proposed by Nate Goldshlag, Chapter 9 617-548-3588
nateg@pobox.com

ARTICLE XII. CHAPTERS

Section 4. Chapter dues

Chapters may assess dues ~~for membership in the Chapter. A Chapter may set rules and guidelines for the waiver of Chapter dues.~~, **but such dues are voluntary and optional, and do not replace national dues. Failure to pay Chapter dues may not be used to deny membership in a Chapter, or membership activities, to Full members.**

Rationale:

Some chapters assess local dues and do not tell members that if they do not pay national dues then they are not members of Veterans For Peace. The board has always taken the position that chapter dues are optional. Yet some chapters, like the Smedley Butler Chapter 9, make payment of local dues a condition of membership. Paying such dues in that chapter are necessary to vote for chapter officers and vote on motions in meetings.

The current bylaws are contradictory. On the one hand, Article XII Section 4 (which I propose changing) says that “Chapters may assess dues for membership in the Chapter.” The Smedleys interpret this (wrongly, I believe) as saying if you don’t pay local dues, you are not a member of the chapter and can’t vote for officers and motions. On the other hand, Section 5 of the same article says “Chapters may not exclude Full members who live within their geographical area.” So if I don’t pay local dues but am a full member, that section says I am a member of the chapter. I think these two are in conflict, and this bylaw change resolves this conflict and also makes explicit that chapters cannot compel members to pay local dues.

2016 BL-6

Bylaw Proposal Submitted by Gene Marx, VFP-111 ejmarx2@gmail.org 253-653-4423, Ben Griffin, VFP-UK coord@vfpuk.org +44 07866 559 312, Michael Jacobsen, VFP-111 mjacobsen57@yahoo.com 360-746-8535, and S. Brian Willson, VFP-072 bw@brianwillson.com 503-774-9197

Add: ARTICLE XV. FUNDING

Veterans For Peace, Inc. shall not solicit funding nor accept donations from individuals, corporations, or government entities whose actions or policies are inconsistent or incompatible with the Veterans For Peace Statement of Purpose (Article II) or mission.

Rationale:

For nearly 30 years, the peace and justice agenda of Veterans For Peace has been funded primarily through the generous donations of members. With some frequency our organization has also received charitable support from individuals, foundations, and corporations. Decisions by VFP governance to accept or reject such support usually require little or no vetting of the benefactor – Ralph Nader or Angie’s List. At other times the VFP Statement of Purpose is parsed to validate questionable sources of funds – USAID.

To be a fully effective, independent organization with the freedom to campaign nationally or internationally on issues fundamental to our objectives, VFP has to be above reproach. Such funding could suggest that we are politically influenced or funded, directly or indirectly, by governments, corporations or organizations run or funded by governments or governmental entities with agendas that run counter to the larger purpose of world peace, social justice, and sustainability. Examples include GE, Monsanto, Chevron, Samsung, the Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance Resources, and arguably to political partisans the Buffett Foundation and George Soros’ Open Society.

Finally, there is a significant chance that even acting as a conduit for such funding, VFP would be discredited in such a way as to destroy our credibility globally and hamper its mission of exposing the true costs of war and militarism, which indisputably are leading to the destruction of the planet. While there are nonprofit organizations that do turn blind eyes to the source of donations, Veterans For Peace, will never have that luxury as it navigates scrutiny from the outside.

This proposed bylaw addition will provide fundamental guidance inside the organization for determining not only the acceptability of benefactors but the efficacy of the funding.