

Bringing the CO\$T of WAR Home: Telling the Local Story

The Co\$t of War campaign asks our US Senators and Representatives to explain how much Congress has authorized spending and what they have cut to pay for the war and occupation in Iraq. We are gathering facts, figures, and anecdotes from our local communities to testify to the local cost of war. This information will be presented to our Members of Congress. You can get facts on just how much money any community has paid for the war at <http://www.rop.org/CostofWar.htm>.

All of our communities are struggling to meet basic needs. The disaster of Hurricane Katrina demonstrated just how broken our safety net is and how unable our government is to take care of us. Meanwhile, the War in Iraq has consumed over \$347 billion and over \$2.7 billion in Oregon.

County:

Cost of War for Our County: Date:

Information available at <http://www.rop.org/CostofWar.htm> or email cara@rop.org for a copy of this survey with your county's cost of war information inserted.

Instead, we could have:

- Paid for ___ children to attend a year of Head Start
- Insured ___ children for one year
- Hired ___ additional public school teachers for one year
- Built ___ additional housing units
- Provided ___ students four-year scholarships at public universities

This Community Survey is to gather perspectives from you, your neighbors, local elected officials and social service agency representatives (from the school board and county commissioners to the local head start, hospitals, health clinics, food banks, domestic violence programs, or housing providers). We want to hear about the actual Cost of the War to your town. This survey is intended to find out how local budgets and programs have been affected by federal priorities.

Name:

Title:

Organization:

Your Address/Phone/Email:

1. **Have you seen this community lose funding in the past three years (since March 19th, 2003, the beginning of the war in Iraq)? Yes / No**

What was the funding for? What particular services or programs were cut or reduced?

What impact have these cuts had on you and/or your community?

2. **If you had access to the tax dollars from your county that have been spent on the war in Iraq (see above), what kinds of programs or services would you fund, restore, or create?**

3. **Do you have any other comments that you would like to share with our Senators and Representative?**

Thank you!

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The Co\$ of War campaign is focused on getting our elected officials to account for how much they have authorized in new spending and what they have cut to pay for this illegal and immoral war. But a key part of making them do this accounting – unfortunately it is not enough that this is supposed to be government of, for, and by the people – is actually getting the people to demand it.

This is where your local organizing comes in. And what better way to build a local movement to support the Co\$ of War Campaign than to tell the story of what the local cost of war looks like. There are at least two ways to do this:

Co\$ of War Numbers: Getting the Facts for Your Community

You can get the facts on just how much money your community is contributing to the war and occupation in Iraq at www.costofwar.com. You can also find out what your communities portion of the cost of war would buy in terms of teachers, healthcare coverage, head start slots, and college scholarships.

ROP has already requested data for every county in the state. This information should be available in the next couple of weeks. If they don't have the town listed that you want, you can contact them and they will crunch the numbers for you. To add a community to the local cost of war list, just write to info@nationalpriorities.org. Be sure to include your name, address, contact information, local group name, and let them know that you are part of ROP's Cost of War campaign.

Take this information and do all kinds of things with it!

- Incorporate it onto signs and posters for Co\$ of War vigil dates. For example, your signs might read:
 - What is the Co\$ of War in Coos County?
 - \$33,799,883 in Coos County
 - 585 Teachers in Coos County
 - Insurance for 20,239 Children in Coos County
 - 1638 College Scholarships in Coos County
- Include this information in letters to the editor and press releases about your events.
- Hold a community forum to “buy back” these services.

Telling Our Co\$ of War Story: Sometimes Numbers Aren't Enough!

Numbers can be abstract for many of us. Even when we break them down as they are above, they are still based on averages and generalities versus the specifics of your community. Stories that can capture what actual cuts and costs your community has undergone will move people in a deeper way.

Here are some ideas for how to compile your community's personal Co\$ of War story:

- Find local members of your community who have been most affected by cuts to human services and ask them about their stories. This could include low-income people, seniors on a fixed income, people who speak English as a second language, homeless community members, parents, and people with disabilities. Starting with a one on one conversation can be the best way to build this relationship. Find people or groups who would be willing to host a small focus group to talk about the impacts of cuts to human services and the cost of war.
- Meet with social service agency representatives (from the school board and county commissioners to the local head start, hospitals and health clinics, food banks, domestic violence programs, or housing providers). Ask them about funding they have lost in the past three years. Find out where the funding came from. Was it a federal or state or local source? Were they told why the funding was cut?
- Hold a community forum that invites the community to tell their stories of what services or programs have been lost over the past three years. Compile these stories to share with your representative.
- Invite community members to testify at a community hearing on the Co\$ of War. Invite your legislators to listen and give their own accounting.

For more information or to get involved, contact ROP at (503) 543-8417 or amy@rop.org.