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IRAQ WAR DEATH TOLL COMES TO THE DOORSTEP OF BUSH/ALLEN FUNDRAISER IN RICHMOND, VA

Peace groups will create a powerful visual representation of the deaths caused by the Iraq war and call for citizens to vote for peace in the upcoming election.

WHEN: Thursday, October 19th, 2:30 PM

WHERE: Outside the Bush-Allen Fundraiser, Science Museum of Virginia, 2500 W Broad St, Richmond, VA

PHOTO OPPORTUNITY: Hundreds of shoes of all sizes representing the thousands of US soldiers and hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians killed in the war.

WHAT: In an effort to draw attention to the ongoing tragedy of the Iraq war, peace groups and concerned citizens will be creating a display of hundreds of shoes, representing civilians and soldiers killed in Iraq, outside the Thursday evening fundraiser featuring President George W. Bush and pro-war Senator George Allen.

"Thursday in Richmond two of the most powerful pro-war politicians in the country will be holding a fundraiser. Do they realize or care that nearly three thousand young Americans have died in Iraq, and a new study released last week showed that a devastating 655,000 Iraqis have died? We need to end this war by holding pro-war politicians accountable on Election Day. It's time to give peace a vote!" said Virginia resident Rain Burroughs.

Organizers of the creative action outside the fundraiser say that candidates who still support the war in Iraq must see the consequence of their votes to go to war, to fund war, and 'stay the course.' Shoes help people visualize the unspeakable pain and suffering this war has inflicted on the Iraqi people. Holocaust survivors throughout the world have displayed shoes to represent the hundreds of thousands of people killed in concentration camps during World War II.

The Virginia race is one of many Congressional and Senatorial races that hinges on the candidates' positions on the Iraq war. Senator George Allen supports the Iraq war and occupation; challenger James Webb opposes it. The war has so far cost the lives of 2,771 US soldiers and caused the injuries of 44,779 others (<http://www.icasualties.org/oif/> <<http://www.icasualties.org/oif/>>). A new study by Johns Hopkins University researchers found that an astonishing 655,000 Iraqis have died since the US invaded Iraq in 2003. Meanwhile, there is no plan for ending the war or even a timeline for US troops withdrawal.

Give Peace a Vote (www.givepeaceavote.org), the group organizing the display of shoes outside the Richmond fundraiser, is an effort to get voters to pledge that they will not vote for or support any candidate for Congress or President who does not make a speedy end to the war in Iraq, and preventing any future war of aggression, a public position in his or her campaign. It was launched by the national women's peace group CODEPINK, www.codepinkalert.org.

So far more than 20,000 people have signed the "Give Peace a Vote" pledge, including actors Angelica Huston, Kate Hudson, Susan Sarandon, Samuel Jackson, Marisa Tomei, Julia Louise-Dryfus, Sandra Oh, Mike Farrell, Vanessa Williams, Ed Asner and Daryl Hannah; director Paul Haggis; musicians Jackson Browne, Steve Earle, Cher and Michael Franti; and authors, Alice Walker, Maxine Hong Kingston, Cornel West, Gloria Steinem, Howard Zinn and Gore Vidal, among others. Yoko Ono, who co-wrote with John Lennon the song "Give Peace a Chance," after which the peace voters campaign is named, also signed the pledge.

With a majority of Americans saying they oppose the Iraq war and want the troops to be withdrawn within a year, peace groups have decided that their best chance for a change in Iraq policy is to send a message to the politicians at the voting booth on November 7th.

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