

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE NORTHWEST INDIANA COALITION AGAINST THE IRAQ WAR

The *NORTHWEST INDIANA COALITION AGAINST THE WAR IN IRAQ* was formed in the spring of 2005. In the past 2 ½ years we have grown to include groups and individuals from Hammond, Highland, East Chicago, Gary, Portage, Valparaiso, Michigan City, Hobart and other communities here in the Region.

We have built a website and created a List-Serve on the internet. We have become affiliated with *Chicagoans Against War and Injustice* and the *Indiana Peace and Justice Network*. We have joined with the national group *United for Peace and Justice*. We have supported other peace organizations such as *Code Pink*, *Valparaiso Faculty and Students against the War*, and the *Purdue Calumet University Social Justice Club*.

Among our many activities the following stand out:

- Distribution of yard signs, car magnets, window stickers, T-shirts, and buttons.
- Lobbied for and gained the adoption of an anti-war resolution by the Gary Common Council, a resolution opposing the troop surge, and another resolution opposing war against Iran.
- Gaining the support of Congressman Peter Visclosky in taking a public stand against the war in Iraq.
- Meeting with staff members of Senator Richard Lugar and lobbying him to oppose the war in Iraq.
- Meeting with Senator Bayh voicing our concerns that he become a more vocal opponent of the war in Iraq.
- Gaining the support of the Gary School Board to publicize the Opt-out portion of the No Child Left Behind law which allows students to restrict the school system from giving their contact information to military recruiters. And conducted similar lobbying activities with the Valparaiso Public School system.
- Created an outdoor advertising sign campaign that includes an OUT OF IRAQ sign on the Indiana Toll Road, numerous “junior billboards” throughout the region, and a new sign outside the Gary/Chicago airport.
- Gained thousands of signatures on Petitions to Federal Lawmakers opposing the war.

- Conducted weekly vigils in public locations to demonstrate visible opposition to the war and to leaflet contact information of federal lawmakers for citizens to oppose the troop surge.
- Arranged the showing of films about the Iraq war and military recruitment.
- Established informational tables at numerous events such as the Gary Air Show, the Miller Fest in the First, the Fourth of July celebrations, the Gary Art Fair, and joined in the Valparaiso Popcorn Fest and Parade.
- Supported teach-ins at Valparaiso University, a Symposium at Purdue Calumet University and public rallies and marches in Gary.
- Hosted visits by Cindy Sheehan, Carolyn Ho (mother of Lt. Ehren Watada) and Col. Anne Wright.
- Hosted the “Eyes Wide Open” display of boots at Valparaiso University.

These activities are only highlights of the efforts of all of us to end this disastrous war of occupation going on in Iraq. We welcome all who want to join and continue this effort.