



Women. Power. Peace.



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Testimony prepared by Susan Shaer, executive director of WAND,
Women's Action for New Directions
Presented by Maureen Campbell, Washington WAND and WiLL Associate

Over the weekend of June 26th, “America Speaks” events were held around the country to allow ordinary Americans to voice their opinions about federal budget priorities. The members of WAND, Women's Action for New Directions, were not surprised to learn that when American's spoke it was revealed that 85 percent of event participants wanted to cut military spending.

Since the end of the Cold War, when WAND changed its name from Women's Action for Nuclear Disarmament, and the entire planet expected there would be a peace dividend, WAND has prepared citizens and elected officials for that anticipated surplus. Our mission is to redirect excessive military spending toward unmet human and environmental needs. Our objective has been to make certain that unnecessary and excessive military budget spending be made available for other kinds of security: health care, jobs, education, and a clean and safe world in which our citizens can thrive.

The Soviet Union crumbled in part because of their dreadful waste of funds on Cold War weapons of war. Imagine our outrage when the U.S. Congress extended the lives of American Cold War weapons systems that were no longer needed. The long arm of the “military-congressional-industrial complex” that President and General Dwight David Eisenhower warned us about had truly taken control.

Instead of a peace economy and a peace dividend, we have seen military spending expand exponentially. Others will testify on the data and this unprecedented growth. WAND's job here is to represent and affirm the widely held belief that spending priorities must change in order to effect real and lasting security beyond military spending..

Thank you to President Obama for naming this Commission, and to you two co-chairs, former U.S. Senator Simpson and former Clinton White House Chief of Staff Erskine Bowles, for taking this testimony. We want this official and august body of evaluators to know that a discretionary budget that spends almost 58% on the military is misguided and out of synch with American values.

In the years WAND has been watching the military side of the discretionary federal budget grow, this is the first time we have been able to represent the millions of Americans who agree with us on budget priorities to a group that can truly make an impact. We ask that you put the military budget on the table for cuts by a recalcitrant Congress.

We also want to emphasize that President Obama, through Secretary of Defense Gates and undersecretary of defense for acquisition Ashton Carter, has made it clear that military services need to identify \$100 billion dollars in savings. The public report submitted by the Sustainable Defense Task Force, co-chaired by Congressman Barney Frank and Senator Ron Wyden, lists substantial cuts that would far exceed even the Gates list. While savings might not transfer to domestic discretionary spending-- as we would like-- money would be made available to pay military salaries, benefits and to support troops serving around the world.

WAND could not agree more that we need a strong defense and that our troops should be properly supported and equipped. We also believe that the Defense Department should be required to pass audits, meet contract deadlines and use reputable contractors.

As a grassroots organization that can claim one third of all women state legislators as members of WAND's Women Legislator's Lobby, we assure you that we stand ready to help realign our federal spending priorities. WAND and its wealth of activists and partner organizations will work for fiscal responsibility for the military side of the budget and for greater support for the unmet human and environmental needs in our country.