

PRESS RELEASE – PeaceAware.com – PROTECT CIVIL LIBERTIES – Resolution Needs 4000 signatures in Las Cruces - 10-23-03; Printed in Sun-News Thursday Oct 30 2003 p. 10A: letters to the editor, title “Civil Liberties.”

On Thursday October 23rd, members of PeaceAware and the head of the local ACLU chapter met with Mayor Bill Mattiace. They shared concerns about the U.S.A. PATRIOT act, an acronym, “Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism.”

Those present agreed to prepare a special Town Hall meeting in December. Tony Harris, ACLU’s Southern New Mexico board president will develop a panel of speakers, and set the date.

Mano and Bill Wilkes, Kelley Elkins, and David Boje of PeaceAware presented the mayor with study documents, including Nancy Baker (Dept. of Government) and Peter Gregware’s (Dept. of Criminal Justice) recent letter, "USA Patriot Act infringes on guaranteed rights" (RoundUp October 23).

Bill and Mano discussed how the U.S.A. PATRIOT act sets a ‘climate of fear’ in Las Cruces, where people are afraid to check out books from the library, have curbed their speech on email, and limit their free speech for fear that their name will appear on a non-fly list. David discussed how local authorities can enter homes without warrants or judicial oversight. Kelley said many conservative groups such as NRA were concerned the patriot act. PeaceAware brought 400 petition signatures requesting City Council put the resolution on its agenda. The resolution affirms the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights be protected against the U.S.A. PATRIOT act.

Mayor Mattiace pointed out that though PeaceAware had raised 400 signatures to put a resolution on the agenda of the Las Cruces City Council, he would not discuss petitions unless there were 3,000 or 4,000 signors. On Saturday Oct 18th Mayoral candidate (councilperson, District 6) Ken Miyagishima attended Food Not Bombs (PeaceAware event), to say, if elected, he will put the Civil Liberties Protection Resolution on the City Council agenda.

New Mexico’s second largest city, Las Cruces, has steadfastly refused to put a civil liberties resolution on its agenda for council discussion. PeaceAware is therefore continuing its petition drive.

Currently 36% of the citizens of New Mexico (population, 1,855,059) are protected by Civil Liberties resolutions protecting them against the abusive power of the U.S.A. PATRIOT act. In all, 676,316 citizens have protection of their Civil Liberties.

Recently (October 9th) Grant County Commissioners unanimously passed their resolution against the U.S.A. PATRIOT act, joining Rio Arriba county, the New Mexico Municipal League, and the cities of Las Vegas, Santa Fe, Socorro, Aztec, Farmington, Taos, Albuquerque --- and approved Civil Liberties protection resolutions in New Mexico.

According to the ACLU 200 cities and counties have passed similar civil liberties resolution. Mayor Mattiace told those present, that he was currently reading the entire U.S.A. PATRIOT act (342 pages). He intends to get input from the local FBI and CIA before making any decision.

Many U.S. libraries are posting signs: U.S.A. PATRIOT act prohibits library workers from informing you if federal agents have obtained records about you. Questions about this policy should be directed to Attorney General John Ashcroft, Department of Justice, Washington, D.C. 20530.

Please contact your councilmember and commissioner to protect our civil liberties. – David M. Boje, Ph.D. co-organizer, PeaceAware <http://PeaceAware.com>

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