

ECUMENICAL MINISTRIES *of* OREGON

Interchurch Center, Suite B ■ 0245 SW Bancroft Street ■ Portland, Oregon 97239
phone (503) 221-1054 ■ fax (1503) 223-7007 ■ Web site www.emoregon.org

Testimony Supporting HJM 9 Jan Elfers, Peace Programs Director Before the House Committee on Elections, Ethics and Rules February 26, 2007

Chair Rosenbaum and Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify. For the record, I am Jan Elfers, the Peace Programs Director for Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, a statewide association made up of 17 Christian denominations, and numerous congregations, social ministries, and inter-religious organizations.

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon and its member religious bodies have been on record against the war in Iraq since before it began and have made this public through press conferences, pastoral letters and dialogue study consultations. Our support of efforts to stop military intervention in Iraq was based on the fact that such a pre-emptive strike would place the lives of US citizens and troops in jeopardy, would create a humanitarian crisis and do so at an incalculable cost. At a time when state and local government budgets are being cut, this expense is especially difficult.

Throughout the nearly four year conflict we have continued our outreach efforts by sponsoring prayer vigils and worship services to support the end of this war, to encourage the families who have husbands, wives, sons and daughters serving in Iraq, and to stand with those who have lost loved ones in this conflict. Now we stand at a crossroad. Some in our communities are to be called once again to make painful sacrifices. These heavily burdened military families: mothers, fathers, husbands, wives, sons and daughters who have already given so much—will be deployed to Iraq, many for the second or third time.

EMO's objections to this war and to a proposed surge in troop numbers continue to be based on the tragic loss of each human life—the 3,155 U.S. military, 50 of which are from the state of Oregon, the hundreds of U.S. civilians and the countless Iraqi civilians, whose death estimates range from tens of thousands by the Department of Defense to 655,000 cited in a recent Johns Hopkins study. In addition, the inordinate monetary costs continue to mount. More than \$369 billion has already been appropriated by Congress to fund military operations and reconstruction, and almost \$3 billion has been spent by Oregonians to date on the war. These dollars could more wisely be spent to fund the social services that our country and state so desperately lack—education, health care, housing and nutritional needs that benefit the common good and serve to build peaceful, prosperous societies.

As an organization that represents a statewide faith community of congregations and inter-religious organizations, EMO recognizes our interdependence with one another. Our responsibilities to society are grounded in the mandate found in the gospel of Matthew, chapter 25, where Jesus reminds us that, "As you did to the least of these brethren, you did it to me." We lift up our commitment to address the challenges we face in our world first of all through diplomacy and by acknowledging the ways in which poverty and its components serve to create hopelessness in the lives of people throughout our world. The prophet Isaiah declares in words that continue to ring true today, "And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

On behalf of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon and the 17 denominations, congregations and organizations we represent, we urge the House to pass House Joint Memorial 9 which urges the President of the United States not to increase the numbers of troops in Iraq.

MEMBER DENOMINATIONS

African Methodist Episcopal Church ■ American Baptist Churches ■ Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oregon ■ Christian Methodist Episcopal Church
■ Church of the Brethren ■ Community of Christ ■ Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Oregon ■ Episcopal Diocese of Oregon
■ Evangelical Lutheran Church in America ■ Greek Orthodox Church ■ Presbytery of the Cascades ■ Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
■ Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Portland ■ United Church of Christ ■ United Methodist Church in Oregon
■ Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches