

RICHARD DUFFEE CONGRESSIONAL PRIORITIES

I'm running because I know that if I do not run, our positions will not be represented. For the last seven years our country has been marching toward full-blown fascism following a sequence eerily similar to Germany's from 1932 to 1937, with September 11 standing in for the Reichstag fire and "Shock and Awe" for Guernica. We have not yet reached the stage Germany reached in 1938, with the Anschluss and Kristallnacht, but our warmongering toward Iran and the House vote to pay Halliburton to build what have to be called concentration camps put us right on schedule towards it. I find this so alarming that I do not believe it is sufficient to say, "That's just the Republicans. The Democrats will cure it." I think it necessary to re-examine the entire course of policy that has led us to this, and to propose alternative policies.

I do not think it necessary to believe that I will win. Third parties have almost never won at the national level, but the dominant parties have often adopted third party platform items. The dominant parties are so intent on winning that they cannot risk creating new public positions. The major parties rarely act from conviction; they say to us what they need to say to get elected and do in office what they need to do to get funds.

My purpose is to open the following positions to public debate. If we do not do this, the major parties and the media do not need to address these issues.

I don't even think it necessary to believe that, as a practical matter, I'd be a better candidate than Mr. Shays or Ms. Himes. It's only necessary to think that I'm more likely to raise the issues you want raised than they are. Let them hear the issues they prefer to ignore articulated, and let them hear the audience respond when they are. Then they might get interested in changing some of their positions.

So my question to you is, do you think these issues should be publicly debated? If you do, let's work together. If you don't, I hope you will find someone who will run on a platform more to your liking. I find the debates between the Democrats and Republicans suffocatingly narrow-minded, so I hope you'll do SOMETHING to get better issues onto the agenda.

Finally, I find the position that Greens should NOT run any congressional candidate ironic, anti-democratic, and hypocritical. Ironic because most of us are ex-Democrats who hold many positions the Democrats used to hold but abandoned. In fact, many of us were once activist Democrats who feel betrayed by party leaders. It is not so much that we moved to the left as that the Democrats moved to the right. Anti-democratic because the Democrats and Republicans cooperate with each other in the effort to limit political discourse to a small range we regard as right of center. Hypocritical because there is an easy solution to the "spoiler" issue: adopt some system of proportional representation. The relevant issue on my website is "Winner Take All," "Being a Spoiler" and "Why I'm Running."

Policies Prioritized:

Priorities in legislation should be set by the magnitude of potential harm and benefit. I get a first approximation of that by estimating the numbers of years of human life that can be lost by failure of a policy or gained by its success.

I am a Green instead of a Democrat because the legislation the Democrats introduce does not satisfy my highest priorities. Each policy priority has implications for a number of pieces of legislation. Because Greens are a small minority, we must seek our goals as we can among the hundreds of bills and riders introduced each year, looking for ways to get items into the platforms of other parties, making coalitions to have policies implemented piecemeal, a part of this one combined with a part of that.

We can't be purists about *form*, but we must define our priorities more clearly than the major parties so you know what we believe energy should be spent on. The Republicans, Democrats, and the media are capable of consuming the bulk of media time on issues of low priority, even by their own standards.

Priority 1: **Nuclear Disarmament.** In 1979 Louis Alvarez proved that a nuclear war could cause a nuclear winter. This has not changed. Ambio estimates of the number of nuclear explosions capable of causing a nuclear winter are as low as 400. The existence of only 400 nuclear weapons may be capable of ending all human life. That would be an indefinitely large, if not infinite, loss of years of life. We cannot risk the existence of 400 nuclear weapons, so we must at least get ourselves and the rest of the world below that threshold. We began on this project as the USSR was collapsing, but we aborted it. Completing it will require complex actions, but Jonathan Schell has provided good outlines for what is needed.

In 1996 the International Court of Justice declared nuclear weapons to be illegal except under conditions the US cannot meet. But I do not even believe that an honest Supreme Court would allow them to pass constitutional muster. The Constitution does not say the President has the power to destroy the world.

Though the category of "weapons of mass destruction" was invented to make us ignore the difference between nuclear weapons and whatever Iraq had, we should also pursue complete disarmament of chemical and bacteriological weapons, cluster bombs, land mines, and depleted uranium shells.

Priority 2: **Halting and Reversing the Greenhouse Effect.** We do not believe there is serious dispute about the existence or potential consequences of Global Warming. The potential for loss of years of human life here is in the range from hundreds of billions of years to the indefinitely large number involved in disarmament.

To stabilize temperatures and allow the poorer half of the world's people to live out their potential life spans will require cutting consumption in developed countries to allow for some expansion of consumption in poor countries. The average American consumes 80 times the energy of the average Indian; it is both necessary and good for us to cut our energy consumption.

A new energy policy is essential. Nuclear power should have no part of it because no government can guarantee the safe storage of spent fuel rods with half lives of 250,000 years. The US is more than 20 years ahead of all other countries militarily, so I advocate shifting the entire military research and development budget to energy research.

Since 2004 the Democrats have not even advocated the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol. Of course we must ratify and implement it. More importantly, we must reverse the effects of US

impact on international environmental negotiations over the last 25 years. Since 1981, the US has watered down ALL international environmental accords. We should propose that every one of them be accepted on terms other countries wanted before we interfered.

Priority 3: Massive UN Reform including Democratic Reform of the Bretton Woods Institutions and the abolition of Absolute Poverty. Up to one to hundred billion years of human life is at stake here, even just for people who are now living. Average life expectancy in Sub-Saharan Africa and in “low human development countries” is now only 46 years, 36 years shorter than the current maximum, in Japan. Essentially, the average person in a poor country is unnecessarily losing 44% of his or her life. The largest reasons for this are 1) that the rich countries, led in this by the US, have not kept their promises of aid; 2) voting in the IMF and World Bank is by amount of money invested, so the rich countries use those institutions to increase their own wealth by forcing currency devaluations; 3) the UN cannot affect the world economic institutions; 4) the US has a stranglehold on both the UN and the Bretton Woods Institutions, and uses it to keep poor countries in subservient positions and to extract as much wealth from them as possible. The net result is that the richest people on earth are feeding off the poorest.

I'm for abolishing the IMF and World Bank outright, replacing them with the International Credit Union Keynes and the Europeans originally wanted. I favor making population the largest factor in the voting systems of the WTO and Credit Union and giving the UN General Assembly some power over both.

Most importantly for the people our international economic system impoverishes, speculation in currency should be abolished and replaced by a system in which currency value is set by purchasing power parity.

I believe all economic policy should be based on the Law of Diminishing Returns because the human benefit derived from expenditures is inversely proportional to the log of the income level at which they are spent. Policies that do not take calculations from the Law into account are designed as if the purpose of economic policy were merely to increase numbers of things, not to improve human life. The intent to increase mere numbers of things or money, of course, is always just a cover for the intent to increase the profit of their owners.

Priority 4: To make the US strictly obey international law, starting with the UN Charter. We are now the largest cause of volatility in world affairs. Since World War II we have been responsible, directly or indirectly, for more deaths than all other nations combined. The loss of years of human life accountable to our government seems to be in the range of 2 to 6 billion years, but the potential for loss of life in the future is far greater; so long as we do not disarm, it can reach the range of the first priority. Therefore, until disarmament takes place, this fourth priority should be regarded as part of the first.

When Truman signed the UN Charter we became third-party beneficiaries of a right to have a government that obeys international law. The UN Charter does not allow the use of force for “pre-emptive defense” or “regime change”, and our government acts in bad faith when it advocates either as a rationale for aggression. We must become trustworthy to the rest of the world. We should do this by signing, ratifying, observing, and enforcing all outstanding human rights conventions, including the charter of the International Criminal Court. We should abolish

all covert action by the CIA or any of the five dozen other agencies our government has authorized to spy. We should ban US corporations from trading arms internationally.

Priority 5: Reducing Levels of Disparity of Income to Levels we had in the 40's and 50's or Lower. Many of the worst features of American life are caused by our extreme differences between the rich and the poor. Of the 21 most developed countries, the US has the greatest extremes of wealth. Statisticians find that crime rates rise with increasing distance between the rich and poor and fall with decreasing distance. The same is true of death and morbidity figures: only one country, Luxembourg, has greater income (adjusted for purchasing power parity) than the US, but 25 have greater longevity, and all but one of them have less money but more evenly distributed wealth. I advocate Sam Pizzigati's draft law requiring that no CEO can earn more than 10 times what the lowest-paid employee earns, so that if a CEO wants a raise, first he has to give a raise to the janitors.

I make the reduction of disparity of wealth—by increasing the steepness of progressive tax structures, by eliminating regressive taxes and reducing flat taxes, as well as by laws linking highest and lowest incomes—my fifth priority for multiple reasons. Besides reducing crime and improving health, I will argue that it will increase the desire for education, the capacity to get useful education, and the appropriateness to their own personalities and desires of the education individuals will seek, all of which improves the welfare of us all. I will also argue that increased equality will decrease the impulse to use drugs, which is an effort to escape from the social pain of disrespect the flourishes in all unequal societies. Most importantly, increasing equality will also lead to increased democracy.

The Law of Diminishing Returns is as relevant here as it is to Priority 3. The Law implies that any transfer from a richer person to a poorer person increases human benefit while any transfer from a poorer person to a richer person decreases it. I would follow every one of Mark Zepezauer's recommendations in *Take the Rich off Welfare*.

Priority 6: Universal Health Care: We average 4.6 years less life expectancy than Japanese citizens have. There are about 293 million of us, so we're losing about 1.35 billion years of life compared to the Japanese.

Only two countries on earth, Lebanon and Togo, spend as great a percentage of their GDP on private health care as the US does: 8%. Only 17 other countries spend more than 4% of their GDP on private health care: Switzerland, Greece, Cyprus, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Bosnia, Armenia, Suriname, Jordan, El Salvador, South Africa, India, Haiti, Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, Malawi. Are those the countries with good health care? Of course not: high life expectancy is a feature of countries with higher PUBLIC expenditure on health, not private expenditure. We have the health care system the rich want us to have because they don't want to pay their share of public health care.

Among the 25 most developed countries, only one, Denmark, has lower life expectancy (77.2 years to our 77.4). It's an outrageous lie to claim the US has good medical care. We only have the world's most expensive medical care, the world's highest drug prices, the world's highest health insurance rates, the world's highest malpractice insurance rates, and the largest percentage of uncared-for people in the developed world.

Priority 7: Abolish the ‘War on Drugs’ and Shrink the Prison Population: Our rate of incarceration began to escalate under Nixon with the rise of mandatory sentencing standards for drug-related offenses. It is now by far the highest rate of incarceration on earth.

The Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965 abolished legal segregation in housing, education, and employment. The White establishment reacted the same way to this that it reacted to the abolition of slavery. Just as between 1865 and 1875 the Southern establishment thrashed around for a way to get Blacks “back into their place” by instituting sharecropping and Jim Crow laws, between 1964 and 1974, the White establishment thrashed around until it found that drug laws could be used to criminalize a large enough percentage of young Black males that most Black families would have a family member who could be used to exclude them from housing and jobs.

Mandatory drug sentencing is just one more means to preserve White privilege. In 1992-94 I tried to persuade the Westchester Civil Liberties Union that challenging the sentencing policies that resulted in far higher Black than White incarceration rates should be their first priority. The ACLU is finally listening. But the number of Blacks in prison keeps growing.

Priority 8: Open Borders: My own and my family’s personal experience convinces me that immigration is an extraordinarily difficult action no sane person undertakes lightly. I do not believe that anyone, including any government official, is in a better position to judge the appropriateness of immigration better than the immigrant.

Second, in *The Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith stated that it is inconceivable that a market economy can work for the general benefit unless the labor market is as open to movement as the markets in goods and capital. Our government claims to be capitalistic, but so long as it prevents the free flow of labor, its claims are hypocritical. Our government wants freedom for owners but slavery for workers.

Other Positions:

Impeachment: Of all measures, the most *urgent* is to impeach Bush and Cheney. They are governing illegally by virtue of stolen elections. They lied to Congress to invade Iraq, are war criminals, are destroying the Bill of Rights, and have authorized the creation of concentration camps for their political enemies.

As a purely practical matter, impeachment must have first priority because Bush and Cheney are untrustworthy enough to undermine or destroy any other positive legislation the House can introduce. We cannot even trust them not to institute martial law.

Admit that the “War on Terror” is a fraud and act consistently with that admission. Also as a practical matter, we are not going to muster the nerve to impeach Bush and Cheney—as we must to reacquire our integrity and reconstruct even the modicum of peace we had in the 1990’s—until we admit that the “War on Terror” is simply a fraud, a con-game, a scam, and that we were initially taken in by it.

Whatever happened on September 11, it was a major crime. Bush initially called the act a crime, but then seemed to realize that logic demanded that if he called it a crime, it should be prosecuted by the International Criminal Court. He didn’t want to ratify the Court’s charter

because he didn't want US officials to be subject to prosecution. So he called the act a "war" and stopped mentioning its criminality.

A war, however, has to be a war against an entity that can sue for peace, and "Terror," being an abstract noun, cannot do that. The "War on Terror" is not a war. It is 1) a blank check for aggression, 2) a device to use circumvent constitutional restrictions on executive power, 3) a rhetorical device to evade international law, 4) a means by which the Pentagon can go back to a funding level even higher than it enjoyed during the Cold War, and with far less justification, and 5) a means of insuring the dominance of oil companies.

How convenient to be able to make war at will without congressional authorization, to cheat us of our civil liberties, and to pressure all the governments of the world to make their intelligence agencies give information to US intelligence agencies. How convenient for the Pentagon and military contractors to have money poured all over them! How convenient for Big Oil to get military policing of the entire Middle East!

Internationally, the "War on Terror" is an assault on the sovereignty of all other nations, for when the Bush administration asserts "If you are not with us, you are against us," all national leaders understand the meaning: "If you try to be neutral, we might attack you." This is no war, just a gross and deceitful usurpation of power from everyone else on earth—including us—in a sleazy effort to escape from the need for international law, and from our own constitution.

Abolish the Federal Reserve Bank or put it under congressional control: For a people to control its own economy is a democratic right. Alexander Hamilton's creation of the National Bank in 1791 and the creation of the Federal Reserve Bank in 1913 destroyed our democratic rights over our economy and placed them in private hands. This is a fundamental betrayal of democracy. Of course, if the Fed is put under congressional control, we will then have to insure that Congress itself becomes more democratic.

Pay Reparations to all countries injured by the CIA and US Military, to descendants of slaves, and to Native Americans. The first step to our becoming trustworthy and reliable is for us to take responsibility for our misdeeds and to compensate those we have injured. If we want peace in the world, we need to move all issues from the forum of war to that of law, and whatever issues we can from that of criminal law to that of civil law. Ideally we want a world that runs by civil law. If that's our goal, we must act as we would have if good civil law had always been in place.

I will add to this list periodically. Any additions or changes you want me to consider, please send to me at richard.duffee@gmail.com.