

"i think war is wrong and i would not pay one cent for a gun."

~Serena Blackburn, born 2000

"For me, the search for spiritual integrity and the importance of non-violence have become completely intertwined and interdependent; war kills my soul."

~Jens Braun, born 1958

## Here I Stand: Crafting Statements of Conscience about Paying Taxes for War

As Christian pacifists and Church of the Brethren pastors, Phil and Louise Baldwin Rieman see no moral difference between the conscription of their bodies to kill and the use of their money to kill. For 39 years, they have redirected the military-related half of their taxes to life-enhancing programs and organizations. What have been the consequences?



Phil and Louise Baldwin Rieman

*"In 1988, the IRS seized our family's \$8,000 Volkswagen van and put it up for auction to cover a \$2,500 tax liability. Our less valuable vehicle was in the garage. Such retribution makes a mockery of freedom of religion. We had shared the van freely with our church and community programs."*

*"The IRS has placed a lien against our property, wages, bank accounts, and two old cars. Living with this uncertainty of seizure as we exercise our beliefs is trying... and we would go to jail before we would willingly pay taxes for war."*

For 35 years, a bill has been before Congress which would respect the liberty, and freedom of religious expression of those like the Riemans who, by reason of their conscience, cannot participate in war. Although those who for conscience reasons cannot physically participate in war are given the opportunity for alternative service, the same accommodation for "drafted dollars" has yet to be granted to citizens who, also for reasons of conscience, cannot financially participate in war by their tax payments.

Most citizens of conscience want to pay their full share of taxes. However, they are currently forced into a dilemma -- either to violate their beliefs, or the nation's tax law. Those who are overcoming fear of the IRS are realizing that their allegiance to the common good of humanity takes precedence over allegiance to the demands of nation-states.

Nearly 60 denominations and groups from across the religious spectrum have endorsed the Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund bill, including the Presbyterian Church USA, United Methodist Church, Mennonite Church USA, National Council of Churches, Sojourners, NETWORK, FCNL, the Baptist Joint Committee, Evangelicals for Social Action, Fellowship of Reconciliation, Jewish and Buddhist Peace Fellowships and Pax Christi. Prominent individuals and secular organizations are also supportive.

In anticipation of a Spring 2008 Congressional hearing on the Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund bill (H.R. 1921), the Peace Tax Foundation is collecting short (one or two sentence) personal Statements of Conscience about Paying Taxes for War. With authors' permission, a compilation of these Statements will be presented to members of Congress beginning April 2008.

Upon reflection, please write your brief expression of personal conscience in the space provided below. Be sure it is personal by using "I, my, or me" (see samples at beginning or at [www.peacetaxfund.org](http://www.peacetaxfund.org)). PRINT LARGE and sign. Statements may be mailed to the address below, or submitted via the website.

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Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_ Year of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ email \_\_\_\_\_

By checking  YES, I permit the Peace Tax Foundation to publish this Statement with name and year of birth ONLY on its website.

The Peace Tax Foundation also encourages participation in Springtime Advocacy. You may travel to Washington D.C. March 30-31 for reflection, unified action and celebration. Some will also forego food for 1-3 days between March 21 to March 30, sending money otherwise spent on food to the Peace Tax Foundation for this collective conscience project. Consult the website or call for more information.



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