

Nature not the only source of closings

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Our recent severe winter weather wasn't the only source of school closings, government service reductions, impassable roads, and citizen fears. Add federal politicians and their budget, tax and corporate policies to the list.

While many looked to the sky for snow, wind and sleet, we must also look to our budget, tax, and corporate policies for the reasons behind our closed, reduced or cancelled public programs and policies that reduce safety and security to people and communities.

The federal budget for next year proposed by the Bush Administration calls for cuts in domestic discretionary spending (outside of funding for "Homeland Security") by \$4 billion. These cuts are added to cuts from previous years. Proposed reductions include home heating assistance for low-income families, childcare assistance, food programs, local law enforcement, and housing programs. Other programs, including the Children's Health Insurance Program and Women's Infant and Children, would see slight increases but not enough to meet all the needs. Proposed cuts and inadequate increases on top of past cuts would close out many people from the social and economic programs that are basic to their security and survival.

Contrast this proposed fiscal austerity for human serving programs with proposed funding for wars and occupations. The President proposes \$481.4 billion for the Department of War (misnamed "Defense"), up 11% from this year. This includes more money for aircraft carriers, the DDG-1000 Destroyer program, combat ships, a nuclear attack submarine, and 5 dozen new jet fighters. Add to this total \$93 billion in immediate "supplemental" funding for continuing the Iraq occupation or Afghanistan, an additional \$141.7 needed to cover Iraq and Afghanistan operations during fiscal year 2008, and funding for the escalation (misnamed "surge") of the occupation in Iraq. Also not included are the military portions of so-called "domestic" departments, such as the Department of Energy (\$17 billion for nuclear weapons), NASA (\$9 billion, or 50% of its budget), Department of Homeland Security (\$31 billion), Veteran's Administration (\$85 billion for benefits), and others.

Tax policies aren't much different. Making permanent, as the President suggests, the temporary tax reductions to people making more than \$1 million will be a windfall for them (averaging \$162,000 a year in 2012 dollars) but costly to the rest of us in dollars that could be used to keep open programs addressing human and security needs.

Finally, public officials (including judges) continue to either support or ignore the rights that business corporations have acquired regarding trade, energy, food, employment, media and elections. Laws, rules and regulations granting or affirming business corporations "personhood" rights close, cancel or cut back citizen powers to determine what goes on in their schools, hospitals, neighborhoods, farms, parks, city halls, state houses, airwaves, and ballot boxes. A privileged few using the corporate shield each and every day further close down the possibilities of citizens to voice their views and control policies affecting their lives.

There's not too much we can do when Mother Nature hits and paralyzes a community for a few hours. But we can do something to prevent the human assault on our lives and communities from bad proposals, policies, laws and rules offered and passed by public officials and pushed for by corporate CEOs. Asserting our right to decide and asserting our ultimate power over elected officials and business corporations is the sort of climate change we need to create.

Sources:

<http://www.afsc.org/locations/dc/documents/proposedbudget.pdf>

The Proposed Fiscal Year 2008 Budget: Little to Reflect Our Values

Aura Kanegis, AFSC Washington Office Director

<http://warresisters.org/piechart.htm>

Where you income tax money really goes