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Protesters still marching

After six years of war in Iraq, peace activists focus on human, economic costs of combat

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Protesters marked the sixth anniversary of the war in Iraq Friday much as they have in Akron each Friday since March 20, 2003.

But this protest focused on the cost of the military occupation during a time when the country is in economic trouble as well as the cost in lives.

About two dozen people marched from Akron City Hall to the Federal Building at Market and Main streets in downtown Akron, where Michael Dalton, district director for Betty Sutton, D-Copley Township, met them and delivered a letter from the congresswoman.

"Today sadly marks the sixth anniversary of the war in Iraq. I join you in the call to bring this war to a quick and responsible end, worthy of all who have served and sacrificed," Sutton wrote.

The United States has lost 4,865, soldiers in the war, including 191 from Ohio, Dalton told the crowd.

Dana Williams of Akron, an adjunct faculty member at the University of Akron who teaches sociology, marched while holding a banner that read: "Rich man's war, poor people's blood."

"We would like to save our economy and stop funding the military," Williams said. "Considering the state of the economy, it's a sage thing to do."

The march was a precursor to a demonstration to be held today in Washington, D.C., said Greg Coleridge of Cleveland Heights.

Protesters were to board buses from Cleveland late Friday following a march from Public Square to the warehouse district, he said. Coleridge is a member of the American Friends Service Committee, the organizer of the Akron and Cleveland events marking the anniversary of the war.

"There are an incredible amount of tax dollars that are going to the war in Iraq and Afghanistan," Coleridge said.

People will arrive at the nation's capital carrying homemade coffins they will take to the steps of the Pentagon to demonstrate the cost of the war in terms of lives and money, he said.

"Can we really afford the \$342,000 that this war has cost the city of Akron?" Coleridge asked.

Those figures were computed by the National Priorities Project, whose Web site says it analyzes and clarifies federal data so people can understand and influence how their tax dollars are spent.

John Beaty, a former minister of Boulevard United Methodist Church in Kenmore and director of the Akron ministry OPEN M, spoke about the protesters who have died since the group joined forces to oppose the war six years ago.

He spoke of John Looney, who founded the Northern Ohio office of the American Friends Service Committee in Akron — a Quaker social-action organization — in 1973 and was its director for 16 years.

Adele Looney, 86, of Wadsworth, attended Friday's demonstration, continuing the work her husband did before he died four years ago.

"We called him the 'Johnny Appleseed of Peace,' " Beaty reminisced.

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