

# **Backgrounder on 1040 for Peace**

***Q: What is 1040 for Peace?***

A: We're people communicating with our national government about militarism through the annual filing of income tax Form 1040.

***Q: What is it you want to communicate about militarism?***

A: That it's harming our country. That it has distorted our economy and created huge national debt. That it's causing great suffering around the world. That it is changing us – changing our values – and causing us to see violence and domination as the path forward.

***Q: What prompts you to speak out now?***

A: We've had ten years of continuous war and we see no end in sight. It's become clear our government plans to occupy Iraq and Afghanistan indefinitely. An expansion of U.S. war-making into Pakistan, Iran and Yemen is already underway.

***Q: But that is in response to the terrorism of 9/11. Don't you see terrorism as a threat?***

A: Terrorism is a weapon used by the weak to fight the strong. It has been a threat since the beginning of history and yes, it is a threat now. But the military occupation of other countries, and the destruction and killing of innocent civilian that comes with that, creates more terrorists. Militarism is creating many more terrorists than it is capturing or killing.

***Q: Are you asking people to stop paying their taxes?***

A: We are asking people to examine their consciences and then to tell the government what they find there. If they find in their own hearts an objection to the path of domination and violence, then we are asking them to bear witness to the government, as well as to friends and neighbors. What we don't want is for people to ignore conscience. We don't want people to remain silent.

In my last tax return, I didn't pay \$10.40 of what Form 1040 said was due. I told my elected representatives I had underpaid and why. It was an exercise of conscience and of citizenship.

***Q: Isn't the failure to pay all that is due a crime?***

A: Some would say it is a federal misdemeanor; I'm not sure. It's a risk I'm prepared to take to follow my conscience. It's a risk I believe Jesus Christ, who I follow, asked us to take. It's a risk many honorable Americans have been willing to take when something important is at stake.

Those of us who withhold payment of \$10.40 are not doing anything deceptive or fraudulent. We declare all of our income, we do not put extraneous comments on the tax forms, and we acknowledge the full amount the IRS says is due. Then we simply decline to pay all of it immediately. If that leads to prosecution, it would be another opportunity to communicate the requirements of conscience to our government.

***Q: Why do you think it's particularly effective to not pay \$10.40?***

A: It's particularly effective if lots of people send the same message, whatever that message may be. Filing Form 1040 isn't a pleasant experience for any of us; it's even harder when we allow conscience to speak into that experience. So it helps if one of the options is an action that many other people are taking as well.

***Q: Can you keep the IRS from getting everything you owe, plus penalties and interest?***

A: This isn't about beating the IRS, which usually gets what it claims to be due. We accept that; in fact, some who withhold payment of \$10.40 at tax time voluntarily pay it later that year when the IRS sends out a notice of underpayment. **1040 for Peace** is a witness to the promptings of conscience. It's a message to our leaders about a great error that is leading our country to ruin, and it's done in a way that joins each voice with many others to make that message strong.

***Q: How many people are doing this? How many chapters have been established?***

A: We aren't sure. Tax witness has been a part of American dissent from the days of Thoreau and it has never stopped. We aren't in a position to keep track of the strength of this movement; we're pretty sure the IRS is doing that. What we can do is to add to the strength of the movement by our participation in tax witness and by our website, **1040forPeace.org**.

***Q. Tell me about 1040 for Peace. Who started it and when?***

A: Symbolic war tax resistance has been practiced for many years; it's not a new idea. **1040 for Peace** is a new effort to raise the visibility of this old practice, and to increase its effectiveness by withholding a standard amount: \$10.40. A handful of people from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania coined the name in early 2010. Each had witnessed the bitter harvest produced by militarism and wanted to unite our dissenting voices in a common message to government.

- Paul Leatherman is a retired business executive. He lived and worked in Vietnam during the war there.
- Titus Peachey lived in Laos after the war there and has counseled U.S. soldiers who object on grounds of conscience to what they are being asked to do.
- Harold A. ("H.A.") Penner, an administrator of national church-related programs and war tax redirector, lived in Guatemala during the turmoil there.
- Rick Stamm owns his own business and served as a pilot in the Air Force during the '70s and '80s.
- John Stoner is a pastor and teacher who helped start Every Church a Peace Church.

***Q: Are you pacifists?***

A: Some of us are, some of us are not. We share the conviction that the danger President Madison warned about 200 years ago, that President Eisenhower warned about 50 years ago, has come to pass. Militarism has hollowed out our democracy, corrupted our leaders, and blinded our media. The military and its many contractors define every challenge in such a way that violence and military domination are the only logical solutions. It's critical that we break out of this narrow and self-perpetuating mindset. It's not working. It's wrecking our economy, it's hell for those serving at the frontlines, and it's creating ever more enemies for our nation.

Remember, military spending has jumped by nearly 90 percent since 1998. "The baseline defense budget has been growing in real terms for 13 straight years, the longest-ever period of sustained real growth in U.S. defense spending. As a result, the portion of the world's military expenditures the United States consumes compared to our potential adversaries has grown from 60 percent to 250 percent. This means that even if the United States were to cut its spending in half it would still be spending more than its current and potential adversaries." Lawrence J. Korb and Laura Conley, Center for American Progress, September 2010.

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Berry Friesen, **1040 for Peace** (January 14, 2011)

(Following are warnings from two former presidents about the dangers of war and militarism.)

**From James Madison, President of the United States:**

“Of all the enemies to public liberty war is, perhaps, the most to be dreaded, because it comprises and develops the germ of every other.

“War is the parent of armies; from these proceed debts and taxes; and armies, and debts, and taxes are the known instruments for bringing the many under the domination of the few.

“In war, too, the discretionary power of the executive is extended; its influence in dealing out offices, honors, and emoluments is multiplied; and all the means of seducing the minds are added to those of subduing the force of the people.

“The same malignant aspect in republicanism may be traced in the inequality of fortunes, and the opportunities of fraud, growing out of a state of war, and in the degeneracy of manners and of morals, engendered by both.

“No nation could preserve its freedom in the midst of continual warfare.”

**From Dwight Eisenhower, President of the United States:**

“Our military organization today bears little relation to that known by any of my predecessors in peacetime, or indeed by the fighting men of World War II or Korea.

“Until the latest of our world conflicts, the United States had no armaments industry. American makers of plowshares could, with time and as required, make swords as well. But now we can no longer risk emergency improvisation of national defense; we have been compelled to create a permanent armaments industry of vast proportions. Added to this, three and a half million men and women are directly engaged in the defense establishment. We annually spend on military security more than the net income of all United States corporations.

“This conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence -- economic, political, even spiritual -- is felt in every city, every State house, every office of the Federal government. We recognize the imperative need for this development. Yet we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications. Our toil, resources and livelihood are all involved; so is the very structure of our society.

“In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.

“We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together.”