

Rebuilding the American Dream by Ending the Wars, Investing at Home

8. End the Wars and Invest at Home. Our troops have done everything that's been asked of them, and it's time to bring them home to good jobs here. We're sending \$3 billion *each week* overseas that we should be investing to rebuild America.

“There is no way to fund what we must do as a nation without bringing our troops home from Iraq and Afghanistan. The militarization of our foreign policy has proven to be a costly mistake. It is time to invest at home.” – Richard Trumka, President, AFL-CIO

Sometimes it's only outside of Washington, DC that the fundamental common sense of Americans shows up. The bi-partisan U.S. Conference of Mayors just passed a powerful [resolution calling on the U.S. government to end the wars](#) in Iraq and Afghanistan and to “bring these war dollars home.” The mayors are on the front line of our economic crisis, struggling to find money to keep our workers employed, our children healthy, our elders safe.

Americans get it – 64% already say that the [war in Afghanistan is just not worth fighting](#). Opposition to the war in Iraq has been even higher than that for years. But it sure seems like no one in Washington is listening. This year alone, we [taxpayers are paying more than \\$169 BILLION](#) for those wars. [National Priorities Project (NPP)]

- Why? Partly because keeping one soldier in Afghanistan for a year costs a MILLION dollars. The soldiers aren't over-paid; some of them even [qualify for food stamps](#). But with just that million dollars, we could hire that soldier and 19 more in good, green middle-class jobs back home.
- For the [\\$169 billion 2011 war cost, we could hire](#) three million firefighters, or 2.6 million police officers or 2.6 elementary school teachers. Plus without the war, we'd still have enough money to help Afghanistan rebuild. [NPP]
- The multi-billion-dollar costs of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (plus the drones in Pakistan and Yemen and the new war in Libya) aren't even included in the official [Pentagon budget of \\$553 billion!](#) So the debt ceiling deal's “security cuts” exempt spending on the actual wars, even though war costs are one of the biggest factors driving up the national debt. [NPP]
- Most important, the wars don't make us safer. In fact, they've made us all *less* safe. As far back as 2005, the CIA's [National Intelligence Council said](#) that the war in Iraq had created “a training and recruitment ground, and an opportunity for terrorists to enhance their technical skills.” Spending billions on war in Afghanistan doesn't protect us – the CIA admits only 50 or 75 al-Qaeda members are even left there. But the number of deaths of our young troops and of Afghan civilians is still rising.
- The war isn't helping Afghans either. Despite U.S. claims of greater efforts to protect civilians, the most [recent UN report](#) documented 2,777 civilian deaths in Afghanistan last year. It noted “civilian deaths [are] increasing each year” and that “the worsening human impact of the conflict reinforces the urgent need for parties to the conflict to do more to protect Afghan civilians, who, in 2010, were killed and injured in their homes and communities in even greater numbers.” [United Nations]