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"Healthcare not Warfare" is the call for local groups

Code Pink Founder Benjamin to appear at City Hall rally

Austin, Texas—A coalition of groups including Texans for Peace and Code Pink will rally at City Hall plaza on Saturday, October 17th, from 3PM to 6PM to call for both healthcare reform and an end to wars, according to spokesman Charlie Jackson, the founder of Texans for Peace. Medea Benjamin, a co-founder of Code Pink, will travel to the city from Dallas, where earlier in the day, she leads antiwar actions there.

The line-up of speakers is a diverse one, Jackson noted, with Jesse Romero, statewide director of "Healthcare Now" leading off after an opening by the Austin Center for Peace and Justice's Roscoe Lee Overton. The Reverend Jim Rigby, pastor of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, will also speak on healthcare, and Jackson, who has made four trips to Iraq in the last seven years, will call for an end to the wars in that country and in Afghanistan. Iraq Veterans Against the War members Brian Henretta and Bobby Whittenberg will speak out against the wars in which they served. A very poignant presentation will come from a local family who suffered a tragic loss as a result of this country's lack of healthcare, and their story will be revealed in heartbreaking detail.

Several Austin musicians have volunteered their bands for the rally, as well. Joe Carr, as well known for his activism as he is for his music, will appear, as Castro's Beard and Will T. Massey. A teach-in, scheduled for 2:30 at the site, will feature Mac McKaskle; a sign-making lab will take place at the same time.

"The cost of the war in Iraq will have reached \$692 billion dollars by the time this rally is held," Jackson offered, "And the war in Afghanistan, on track to become the nation's longest, will have hit the \$230 million mark. Americans on all sides of the aisle are coming to the conclusion that we can't afford the cost of these wars—we have Americans here at home who are suffering and dying from lack of healthcare. That's why we chose to hold this event, commemorating the beginning of the war in Afghanistan. Events like this one are happening all over the country this weekend, and Austin is, as always, a leader in voicing opposition to the *wars*."

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