

Letters to the editor

Preface: Letters to the editor are a great way to tell our neighbors about the "25%" campaign. Some may pick up on the idea. They might ask Senate candidates "will you cut military spending to fund the services we're losing?" They might take the idea to a city council or state rep. They might start a coalition of service and advocacy groups to agitate for 25%, as people in Boston did.

There are any number of hooks (excuses) for your letter: Obama's Nobel Prize, the war in Afghanistan, another local service cut, the news that the state may have to cut \$2 billion more out of its budget this spring. To make it even easier, here are some samples. Should you get inspired, more materials on this site will help you write an op-ed -- including one op-ed that already got published. Don't hesitate, write! You can do better than these samples.

(And if you are on Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc, all this applies even more to the internet.)

Hook: Obama's Nobel

How can President Obama earn his Nobel? Well, how about giving us a peace dividend? The President already says he wants to reduce nuclear warheads, retire obsolete weapons systems, and trim waste, which will save about \$75 billion. If he also ends the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and closes half of our 1000 bases overseas, he can save \$250 billion in military spending every year. Massachusetts's share would be \$5 billion -- enough to eliminate our state budget cuts, repair roads, and plug the healthcare funding gap. And he'd make the world a more peaceful place.

Hook: The war in Afghanistan

Reason #9 to end the war in Afghanistan: we need the money back here. It isn't just our bridges that are crumbling. Our social infrastructure -- schools, libraries, human service agencies -- are being eroded by budget cuts. If we don't need jobs, our neighbors do.

Bringing our troops back from Afghanistan and Iraq would save \$110 billion a year for the next ten years, a recent congressional study said. That translates into (multiply the population of your town by \$220) for our city budget. If we go farther and trim a quarter of all military spending -- by closing surplus military bases overseas, shutting down production lines for obsolete Cold War planes and ships, prosecuting fraud and waste -- and brought that money back to Massachusetts, the state government's share would be \$5 billion, enough to undo most of the budget cuts we've suffered.

Why isn't this an issue in the special Senate race? How else will any of the candidates pay for the jobs and services we need?

Hook: Service cut

We're closing three branch libraries in our town. This is on top of cuts in the school budget (music, art, ESPs), the police force, the fire department... and I want to know what

the Senate candidates are offering for solutions.

The town is out of money. The state is going to cut its budget next spring, not raise local aid. The only government in sight with any room to help is in Washington, and the place to start is the military budget.

I'm not talking about cutting pay for soldiers, personal protective equipment, or veterans' services. Those should be increased. But the Pentagon's budget nearly doubled under our last president without counting his wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Experts are saying that military spending can be cut by one quarter without harming our security -- by eliminating Cold War "weapons systems without an enemy," closing some of the 1000 foreign military bases, and most of all, getting out of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Heck, this would probably *increase* our security. What do the Senate candidates have to say about that?

... You get the idea. And you can certainly do better than this.