**To: Saint Patrick’s Day Parade Participants and Supporters,**

**You may not know** - there is a controversy surrounding the practices of the Allied War Veterans Council (AWVC), the group that organizes the Saint Patrick’s Day Parade.

**You may not know** - this small group of men (AWVC) has “exclusive control” over what groups may march in the Saint Patrick’s Day Parade.

**You may not know** - AWVC hold their meetings in total secrecy without public knowledge, involvement or comment. No other South Boston non-profit organization is allowed to attend or participate in the selection process. No group other than the AWVC has a say in who can be in the Saint Patrick’s Parade - **NONE!**

**You may not know** - even though the City of Boston provides an estimated $300,000.00 in support of the parade in the form of a variety of services; Police, DPW, Streets and other city services etc., the City of Boston has no say in who can be in this parade on the streets of South Boston – **NONE!**

**You may not know** – Many veterans of the U.S. Military, who have dutifully served this country, many in war, many having stood in the line of fire defending this country are not allowed to march in the Saint Patrick’s Day Parade. **Veterans For Peace** have served in WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Gulf War, Afghanistan and Iraq. After seeing the horrors of war these veterans now stand for the cause of world peace. According to the parade organizer Phil Wuschke Jr., the AWVC **“does not want to have the word Peace associated with the word Veteran”**. Shame on the AWVC!

**You may not know** – groups from the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT), community are banned from participating in the parade. It is 2013, post “don’t ask, don’t tell”, gay and lesbian men and women serve in the military, have died and been wounded in defense of this country. There is gay marriage in Massachusetts, yet no LGBT group is allowed to participate in the parade. **You may not know** that Boston’s own “Freedom Trail Band” a gay community organization, marched in the Inauguration Parade but would not be allowed in the Saint Patrick’s Parade. **You may not know** that this is the 20th anniversary of *Hurley* Decision, which allowed blatant exclusion and discrimination against the LGBT community in South Boston. **We understand the legality, not the morality; we understand the legal right, not the moral right**. **IT IS TIME TO DO THE RIGHT THING!**

**You may not know** - any group with “peace” in their name is banned from the parade, such as South Boston People for Peace, who have been denied in the past. There are numerous other groups who would like to participate and who have been or would be banned. This is supposed to be a community based parade walking through a historical section of the city and should be inclusive of all its citizens and groups – **IT IS NOT!**

**You may not know** - Mayor Menino does not walk in the Saint Patrick’s Day Parade because of the AWVC’s exclusionary practices towards the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender (LGBT) community.

**You may not know** nor noticed that South Boston has changed in the past twenty years, the culture has changed, the neighborhood has changed, residents have changed, attitudes and politics have changed. Everything has changed except for the antiquated attitudes and prejudices of the AWVC. **THAT TOO WILL CHANGE!**

**You may not know** - one mile behind the first parade is a second parade, **The “Saint Patrick’s Peace Parade”, *The Alternative People’s Parade for Peace, Equality, Jobs, Environmental Stewardship, Economic and Social Justice.*** This second parade was started in 2011 after **Veterans For Peace’s** application to walk in the first parade was denied because of these prejudicial and exclusionary practices of the AWVC.

**You may not know** - your unit or band is invited to participate in the second parade and are encouraged to do so until either the City of Boston takes back management of the first parade or until local South Boston organizations are allowed to participate in the selection process and the first parade becomes an inclusive and welcoming parade for all groups who want to participate.

**We ask all participants, supporters and politicians to take a long hard look at the exclusionary, prejudicial practices of those who organize the traditional Saint Patrick’s Day Parade. Please see the attached information as to why there are two parades in South Boston on Saint Patrick’s Day. Veterans For Peace does not wish to disrupt or harm, in any way, the traditional celebration of the patron Saint of Ireland and the proud heritage and traditions of the Irish people. Saint Patrick was a man of Peace, as Veterans working for peace we only want to be included. We think there should only be one parade, that parade should be inclusive and welcoming for all groups wanting to celebrate Saint Patrick’s Day.**