

My name is Mélida Arredondo. My stepson Lcpl. Alexander Scott Arredondo, USMC was killed at the age of 20 in the war in Iraq in 2004. My stepson Brian Luis Arredondo, Alex's younger brother took his life in 2011 at the age of 24.

Due to divorce and not receiving a high level of education, my stepson's parents were not well off. Therefore, in their short lives my stepsons benefitted from the WIC program, head start, community health centers, Mass Health, school lunches, housing subsidies and other assistance that I might not be aware of.

This was all prior to Alex joining the United States Marine Corps. Alex was first approached by Marine recruiters at the age of 13 when he was a freshman at Blue Hills Regional Technical School in Canton in 1998.

After Alex was killed, Carlos, Brian and I were heavily impacted by his death. We ended up requiring assistance with housing, medical care, counseling services, job placement, etc. At one point, to have sufficient food, we were frequent visitors to the food pantries and received assistance from Project Bread, St. Vincent De Paul and the Salvation Army.

Brian was very distraught over losing his brother that he was unable to complete high school, received counseling after a suicide attempt, and received some employment assistance despite an inability to acquire a job. Brian ended up having legal issues and his multitude of issues ended up strangling him so that ultimately he hanged himself.

I bring up this brief history of my family's struggles as an example of the different ways that government support has aided us and at times failed us.

More than \$1 trillion dollars have been spent on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Currently 27 cents of every tax payer dollars is contributed to ongoing warfare while only 4 cents of that same dollar is spent on education, veterans (and military family) benefits and food each.

In FY2014, taxpayers in Suffolk County, Massachusetts will pay \$1.92 billion to the Department of Defense.

I urge Massachusetts elected state officials to act on behalf of BUDGET FOR ALL. On November 6, 2012 voters in 91 cities and towns across Massachusetts expressed by large margins their support for a "Budget for All" non-binding referendum question by:

1. Preventing cuts to Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and Veterans benefits, or to housing, food and unemployment assistance;

As someone who works at a community health center, my very livelihood is depending on the state and federal governments maintaining and expanding the health care infrastructure and societal safety net. *as well as those I serve*

2. Creating and protecting jobs by investing in manufacturing, schools, housing, renewable energy, transportation and other public services;
3. Providing new revenues for these purposes and to reduce the long-term federal deficit by closing corporate tax loopholes, ending offshore tax havens, and raising taxes on incomes over \$250,000; and
4. Redirecting military spending to these domestic needs by reducing the military budget, ending the war in Afghanistan and bringing U.S. troops home safely now.

As someone who has been directly impacted by losing a family member to military conflict and then losing a second family member due to the lack of support to military families, I emphatically impact that the funds be cut on continued warfare and directed to the peoples but most especially our veterans and their families so that my family's personal steps repeating itself throughout the United States of America.

Submitted by: Mérida Arredondo

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