



# ***Stand Up & Shout Out***

## **A Forum to Protect & Restore our First Amendment Rights**

**For Immediate Release**

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### **Local Citizens Meet to Defend First Amendment Rights**

On Saturday, March 24th, from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM, the Occupy Civil Liberties Working Group and fifteen co-sponsoring organizations will host a public meeting called “Stand Up & Shout Out! - A Forum to Protect & Restore our First Amendment Rights.”

The forum will be held at the Eureka Woman’s Club (1531 J Street, Eureka), and will highlight what organizers feel has been a decade of steady erosion of constitutionally guaranteed first amendment rights of freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and the right to petition the government for redress of grievances.

“Bit-by-bit, piece-by-piece, during the last decade our precious civil liberties have been whittled away,” said working group member David Boyd. He noted a long list of government regulations which he said restrict and criminalize the right to protest. “Although these changes have at times been almost imperceptible, taken as a whole they put some of our most cherished freedoms in jeopardy,” he added.

Forum organizers are especially troubled about what seems to be a coordinated nationwide crackdown on Occupy protests in recent months, and the militarization of police departments by the Department of Homeland Security.

According to working group member Robin Donald, “the millionaires in Congress, towing the line for their corporate bosses, have gutted the Bill of Rights with their votes from the Patriot Act to the recently enacted H.R. 347, which makes free speech a felony. Now, the Humboldt County Supervisors want to further abridge our First Amendment rights.”

Donald was referring to a new Humboldt County protest ordinance which is currently under development. Many fear that, if left unchallenged, this ordinance will further reduce basic freedoms.

“I feel a sense of urgency about this,” stated forum organizer Nezzie Wade. “We need people to join us to stand up and shout out: enough!”

Janelle Egger, another forum organizer, sees the proposed County ordinance as a definite move in the wrong direction. “Through non-violent civil disobedience and meetings with the District Attorney, Occupy Eureka participants have successfully challenged the ban on posting signs, a traditional First Amendment activity. Now is the

time for the County to revisit its restriction against any sort of weather protection, the reduced access to public toilets, and the restriction against Occupy-provided toilets. Now is *not* the time to talk about regulating future First Amendment use of the traditional public forum in front of the courthouse.”

Those sentiments were echoed by Richard Gilchrist, a member of Veterans for Peace Chapter 56, and his wife Gay, who is active in Women in Black. Through their respective organizations, both have made frequent use of the traditional protest area in front of the Humboldt County Courthouse to advocate for peace, and both are concerned that the proposed ordinance will place unnecessary restrictions on this activity.

As a first step in addressing these concerns, the working group is organizing the “Stand Up & Shout Out!” forum, which will include informational presentations by a panel of local experts and activists, followed by an opportunity to work with friends and neighbors to take concrete actions to protect and restore our precious freedoms.

Although the forum will start promptly at 1:00 PM, organizers are inviting the public to arrive at 12:30 PM for refreshments and informal networking.

The support for this effort has been tremendous, according to Boyd. “ We have formed a coalition of at least fifteen local organizations who share our desire to protect and restore our basic freedoms, and support is growing every day.”

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<b>Forum Co-Sponsors</b> (as of 3/19/2012)	
<b>Occupy Eureka</b>	<b>Women’s International League for Peace &amp; Freedom</b>
<b>Veterans for Peace</b>	<b>Those Who Stand with Women in Black</b>
<b>Civil Liberties Monitoring Project</b>	<b>Lost Coast League</b>
<b>Humboldt Civil Liberties Defense Fund</b>	<b>Eureka Progressive Democratic Club</b>
<b>Communities for Justice &amp; Peace</b>	<b>Buddhist Peace Fellowship</b>
<b>Humboldt Free University</b>	<b>Unitarian Universalist Fellowship Social Action Committee</b>
<b>Democracy Unlimited of Humboldt County</b>	<b>Corps Ain’t Peeps Campaign</b>
<b>Move to Amend</b>	

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**Occupy Civil Liberties Working Group**

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