AN ORDINANCE CALLING FOR OUR CONGRESSMEMBERS TO REPORT ON ACTIONS THEY’VE TAKEN TO REDUCE MILITARY SPENDING AND REDIRECT FUNDS TO OUR CITY’S HUMAN NEEDS

1. WHEREAS, because of reduced state and federal revenue, the city of New Haven in 2018 raised real estate taxes on its homeowners and businesses by 11% to meet its budget; and

2. WHEREAS, the U.S. national military budget for 2020 has been increased from $623 billion in 2017 to a proposed $750 billion for 2020, with war-related funds now absorbing 69% of the Federal Discretionary Budget; and

3. WHEREAS, the Green New Deal legislation submitted to Congress to retool the U.S. economy away from fossil fuels to sustainable energy, generating millions of new jobs across the country, will require substantial funding; and

4. WHEREAS, the Pentagon is single greatest polluter and emitter of greenhouse gases in the world; and

5. WHEREAS, the Board of Alders voted to place on the November 2012 New Haven ballot the nonbinding referendum, “Shall Congress reduce military spending; transfer funds to convert to civilian production; create jobs to rebuild our infrastructure; meet pressing human needs?” and

6. WHEREAS, 23,398 citizens voted for this resolution, and only 4,152 voted against it, thus it passed overwhelmingly by a margin of nearly six to one; and

7. WHEREAS, on January 26, 2017, the Human Services Committee of the New Haven Board of Alders held a public hearing where numerous city department directors reported how much better their departments would service the needs of the people if gaps in their budgets were met by reducing the annual national military budget; and

8. WHEREAS, that Committee and subsequently the full Board unanimously passed a resolution calling for our federal legislators to cut the military budget and use the savings to fund human services, infrastructure and other local needs; and

9. WHEREAS, the Chair of that Committee sent a letter with a copy of the approved resolution shortly after its passage to all of the city’s federal legislators, a letter to which they have yet to respond; and

10. WHEREAS, a similar resolution calling for local public hearings and reductions in the military budget was submitted by New Haven Mayor Toni N. Harp to the U.S. Conference of Mayors in June, 2017, and it passed unanimously; and

11. WHEREAS, in both 2017, 2018 and 2019 New Haven’s representative to the House of Representatives and two Senators contrary to the resolution voted to increase the military budget for each of the following years; and
12. WHEREAS, on October 30, 2018, the Human Services Committee of the New Haven Board of Alders held a public hearing where numerous representatives of non-governmental organizations and residents of New Haven reported how much better their organizations would be able to serve the needs of the people if their budgets were supplemented with funds redirected from the annual U.S. military budget; and

13. WHEREAS, that Committee unanimously passed another resolution calling for our federal legislators to cut the military budget and use the savings to fund human services, infrastructure and other local needs;

14. NOW THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF NEW HAVEN AS FOLLOWS:

A New Section is added to New Haven Municipal Code as follows:

Section 1. Action by the Mayor of New Haven

a. Annually no later than the 31st of January the mayor shall be responsible to prepare and submit a letter to our Congressmember and two U.S. Senators requesting a written report of each of their actions during the course of the previous 12 months to reduce the U.S. military budget and redirect funds saved to the human needs and infrastructure of our city. Such actions would for example include retooling manufacturing from weapons to products for civil society, ending ongoing wars and the threats by our government of future wars, abiding by treaties to dismantle nuclear weapons, ending economic warfare, cutting sales of weaponry to foreign countries and ending militarization of our civil police forces. Actions would importantly include guaranteeing Federal jobs as we reduce jobs in armaments and fossil fuels. The letter shall request that such reports be made no later than 30 days following the date of the Mayor’s letter.

b. The mayor shall also be responsible to promptly prepare and file a report to the Board of Alders Office of Legislative Services regarding the implementation of this Ordinance, providing the responses from our Congressional delegation, or lack thereof, to the Board and the public.

c. In the second and each subsequent year following the first letter submitted the Mayor shall compile a report detailing the cumulative actions taken by our Congressional delegation and the resulting effects on civil society and provide such summary to the Alders and the public.

Section 2. Action by the New Haven Board of Alders

a. The Board of Alders shall be responsible, should any member of our Congressional delegation fail to submit an annual report as described above, to hold a public hearing inviting our Congressional representatives, city department heads and the public to speak on the issue of redirecting military funding to human needs.