

Proposal

Title: Ensuring WTR Counselors Are Active and Staying Updated

From: Ruth Benn, Brooklyn, NY

Objective: Recognizing that we are all volunteers, there is still a need to make sure that people listed as counselors on the NWTRC public list stay updated on technical issues and trends and respond to requests for info in a timely fashion. This proposal lays out some ideas designed to ensure that the counselor list is kept up to date and that counselors themselves are active and well informed.

Background: A number of times in recent years when I talk to a counselee, I ask if they contacted anyone else on the NWTRCC list. I don't ask them to name names, but very often they say "yes, but you are the only one who responded." Often they are not people in NYC, which means they are not hearing from the counselor closer to them. Most of these people are feeling anxious about the decision they are making. They want to know that there is information and support available to them. It doesn't look good for NWTRCC if they are not getting a response from people who are publicly listed as counselors.

The second factor is staying updated on technical changes and overall trends. NWTRCC consultants may have a sense of how serious this issue is among the counselors they are in touch with or hear from, but I attend some of the quarterly counselor update calls and it seems that very few counselors participate. Over the years I have heard questions asked that indicate someone has missed info that's been available for some time in WTR literature and in previous sessions.

Proposal(s):

- 1) Counselors should get back to those seeking info within a few days; you can always set a later time to talk or refer them to someone else if you really have no time.
- 2) Stay updated on technical issues and trends. Join or listen to at least one counselor call or in-person session a year; review NWTRCC literature that is online; own/read a copy of WRL's *War Tax Resistance* book (could NWTRCC discount?)
- 3) If the counselor is asked something they don't know the answer to, contact the NWTRCC office (or another informed counselor) to see if there is more information, then take that information and get back to the person yourself. This is both learning for the counselor, keeps you connected locally or regionally, and takes some weight off NWTRCC consultants over time.

Consultant Time: The current schedule of counselor update calls, updates at the two annual gatherings, counseling notes in the newsletter, or any counselor trainings would not change.

Adding a Personal Check-in: If there are counselors on the public list who have not been in touch with NWTRCC for about a year or participated in some way in update sessions, they should be contacted personally by the Coordinator to see if they are still active and staying updated. To make this more specific, email "delinquent" counselors with a short update of items to be aware of; ask them to look over the materials and email back within three days that they reviewed the materials; if there's no response within three days, follow up with another email, phone call or text. If still no response, remove them from the list.

Some who are contacted may feel they'd rather be listed as an Area Contact and not a counselor, but they would still need to be willing to respond to any general inquiries in a timely fashion. Area contacts help strengthen the network!

Budget: No new funding needed.