

Why are there two parades in South Boston on Saint Patrick's Day?



Since 2011 Veterans For Peace have been denied to walk in the historic Saint Patrick's Parade in South Boston. This is the largest parade of its kind in the country with over 700,000 people viewing the parade. The parade has a dual purpose; the celebration of Saint Patrick and the Irish traditions and heritage and a celebration of Evacuation Day, the day the British were run out of Boston. Both days fall on March 17th, so the City of Boston thought it a good idea to have the Allied War Veterans Council (AWVC) organize the parade. The problem is that one side of the equation, St. Patrick, a man of peace, is second fiddle to a military parade. AWVC has the exclusive say in who gets to walk in this historical parade. The City of Boston, South Boston Community Groups, the Boston Police have absolutely no say in who walks the streets of South Boston in the Saint Patrick's Day Parade.

Back in **2011** Veterans For Peace's application was denied, when asked why we were told, **“They did not want to have the word Peace associated with the word Veteran”**. Well they did not know the Smedleys very well. We pulled our own permit and with only three weeks to go before the parade pulled together 500 people and the Saint Patrick's Peace Parade, the Alternative People's Parade for Peace, Equality, Jobs, Environmental Stewardship, Economic and Social Justice was born.

Twenty years ago the LGBT community wanted to walk in the parade and were denied which resulted in a lawsuit that went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court resulting in the Hurley Decision. This decision allows the

AWVC to exclude any group for any reason they choose including Veterans For Peace, who have personally experienced the horrors of war and now stand for peace, the LGBT groups because of who they are and other peace and environmental groups. The Smedleys immediately reached out to the LGBT community, inviting them to “walk in our parade”

In **2013** we had close to 2,000 people and seven divisions, two bands, bag pipers, drummers, a Duck Boat, two trollies etc. In **2014** we repeated the growing success with eight divisions, eight bands, duck boat, trolley and floats.

Our eight divisions are: Veterans For Peace, Peace, Religious, LGBT, Climate Justice, Political, Labor, Social and Economic Justice.

If you or your group support peace and are peaceful and are associated with one of the stated parade themes (see parade guidelines at www.smedleyvfp.org) you are welcome to join one of these divisions.

Our goal is to end this last vestige of institutionalized exclusion, prejudice, bigotry, and homophobia and make this parade inclusive and welcoming to all and bring the message of peace to South Boston on Saint Patrick’s Day. Please join us in South Boston on Saint Patrick’s Day. Be sure to bring your Chapter’s or Organization’s banners, signs and costumes and join us in our fabulous **5th Annual Saint Patrick’s Peace Parade.**

On behalf of the Saint Patrick’s Peace Parade Organizing Committee.

Thank you,

Pat Scanlon (VN ’69)

Coordinator, VFP Chapter 9, Smedley Butler Brigade