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# How war's huge cost could be put to better use at home

By Nancy Tivoli

I don't know anyone who has questioned the patriotism of President Dwight D. Eisenhower, nor the former general's unwavering support of our armed forces. However, unlike our current leaders, Eisenhower was very clear that military spending has an "opportunity cost" and serious consequences.

### SPECIAL TO THE MERCURY NEWS

Whether or not you support the war in Iraq, you should be aware of its costs. What would \$11 billion a month buy in Medicare, housing, food, and education? Those who do support the war should be willing to pay for it now, not on the backs of our children, grandchildren or the most vulnerable.

I have difficulty conceptualizing the \$11 billion or \$12 billion spent each month on this war, but President Eisenhower's examples give me some idea. I do understand all too well the impact of the lack of those dollars on the

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## Eisenhower understood true cost of war

*This is an excerpt from a speech by President Dwight D. Eisenhower to the American Society of Newspaper Editors in 1953:*

"Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed."

"This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists,

the hopes of its children.

"The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: a modern brick school in more than 30 cities. It is two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000 population. It is some two fine, fully equipped hospitals. It is some 50 miles of concrete pavement.

"We pay for a single fighter plane with a half million bushels of wheat. We pay for a single destroyer with new homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people."

■ Funding for the 239,030 students in public schools would be cut by \$525 a student.

■ 4,790 low-income children in 2008-09, and a total of 8,720 by 2009-10, would lose Medi-Cal coverage.

■ 47,490 low-income seniors and people with disabilities would lose the state cost-of-living adjustment for Supplemental Security Income.

■ 14,170 low-income seniors and people with disabilities would receive fewer hours of services through the already overburdened In-Home Supportive Services Program.

■ 228,560 low-income Medi-Cal recipients would have reduced access to health care services because of payment cuts to health care providers.

These wouldn't be the first substantial reductions in these programs. President Bush's proposed budget cuts apply not only to federal programs, but also to grants to states and cities, further reducing support of basic health and human services.

As Eisenhower so eloquently stated 55 years ago:

"This is not a way of life at all, in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron."

Social Security, have been hit hard by higher deductibles and co-payments for medical care and prescriptions. Friends bring them to us when they can't afford prescribed medications or were cutting pills in half or quarters.

They'll face even greater challenges if proposed budget cuts are enacted. Here are some effects of the governor's proposed budget in Santa Clara County, as reported by the California Budget Project ([www.cbpp.org](http://www.cbpp.org)):

most vulnerable in our society.

My agency, Sunnyvale Community Services, is in the business of helping to prevent homelessness and hunger for low-income families and seniors. The families we serve can make ends meet until hit with the unexpected: medical bills, car repairs, reduced work hours or lost wages from jobs without benefits when they or their children are sick.

The seniors we help, barely scraping by on