



PANDA

PEOPLE AGAINST THE NDAA

P.O. Box 653
Bowling Green, OH
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pandaunite.org

Susan,

While we can't make it to Rich's funeral, we wanted to take the time to tell you, and if you so choose, Rich's friends and family at the funeral, what Rich Aucoin meant to us. Our most heartfelt condolences to you during this time.

"You didn't answer their questions" Rich said. We were at a town hall held by Democratic Senator Ed Markey this past November. Two or three audience members had asked the Senator whether or not he would support legislation that would make it a crime to financially boycott the State of Israel. The Senator had effectively dodged their questions, talking about how much he understood their concerns and would take them into consideration when making his vote.

Rich was undeterred. "Senator, we want to know, how will you vote on this bill?" In front of 500 people in a town near his work and his home, he stood in front of a United States Senator and demanded answers. That was Rich.

From his first days in the tea party movement in a solid blue state, Rich was unafraid to speak the truth. Participating in rallies for 2nd amendment rights, civil liberties, and taxes, Rich was the very definition of the citizen "on guard," "firm in principles," and "full of confidence in themselves" that Thomas Jefferson said was necessary to preserve our self government.

We first met Rich at the inaugural meeting of PANDA Massachusetts, as citizens of this great state came together across party lines to defend civil liberties from federal overreach. When the call came down to sign up to take in their cities, Rich was first to the board. Less than a year later, Rich presided over the actions of multiple activists in Oxford, Webster, and Rutland as they successfully passed legislation protecting their citizens from indefinite military detention. Wherever there was a threat to freedom and liberty, Rich would be the one we could count on to stand in the gap, even if at first he stood alone.



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Rich's philosophy of persistence was driven by one thing: If he educated one more person, if his efforts protected one family, one town, one community from government overreach, then he would have accomplished his mission. That's why, week after week, he would show up to city council meetings in an orange jumpsuit, holding a sign, silently, politely, educating others on *their rights and the threat to them*.

Even when city officials harassed him and those he was close to, Rich never backed down. He would confront bullies in the newspapers, on the radio, in person at their offices, or wherever they afforded him the opportunity. He was an inspiration to the people in his community, as the countless people who decided to stand up for themselves after talking to Rich could easily attest. He was not just an inspiration to his community, he was also an inspiration to us, and his activism will live on in our hearts, and our actions, for years to come.

More than an engaged citizen, and an activist, though, Rich had a level of integrity that is all too rare in our society today. We all distinctly remember the time that the Mayor of Worcester, a man who had stood in the way of much of Rich's activism, was reported to have said some pretty embarrassing things about the protesters at his city council meeting. His comments made national news, and the mayor apologized for the comments, which was surprising.

Even though major national news organizations had run with the story, and the Mayor had apologized, Rich knew that he had been the one to make the comment and not the Mayor. Despite the fact that Rich could have let sleeping dogs lie, and let his political adversary take the fall, Rich would have never even considered it. Instead, he contacted each media outlet that produced the story to let them know the comments were his. Rich cared enough about his integrity that he was willing to embarrass himself on national news to set the record straight. That is the kind of man, and the kind of example for us all, that Rich was. That is the kind of example we should all strive to be.

Sometimes, Rich Aucoin was the role model that the Founding Fathers would have been proud of. Sometimes, Rich Aucoin was the lone dissenter in the tradition of civil rights activists before him.



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And sometimes, Rich Aucoin was the rock of integrity that could protect the truth from swirling storms.

But at all times and for all time, Rich Aucoin was and will be our friend, our colleague, and our inspiration.

May he forever rest in peace,

Daniel Johnson

Founder, People Against the NDAA

Jeff Lewis

National Director, Patriot Coalition

Jason Casella

National Director, People Against the NDAA

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