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Independent Congressional Candidate Bernie Sanders Leads
Delegation to Moscow, Leningrad and Yaroslavl on Sister-City
Visit

BURLINGTON, VERMONT-- Independent Congressional candidate Mayor Bernie Sanders of Burlington will lead a 12-person delegation to the Soviet Union (May 31-June 10) to arrange a Sister City relationship between Sanders' home city and Yaroslavl.

Sanders, a four-term progressive mayor, is in a virtual tie for the lead in the race for Vermont's only Congressional seat, according to a recent poll released by the Sanders campaign. Sanders is seeking to replace seven-term Congressman Jim Jeffords who is running for the U.S. Senate this year.

"The State of Vermont has been in the forefront of peace and justice work in this country," Sanders said. "This trip to the Soviet Union to establish a Sister City program with Yaroslavl (150 miles north of Moscow) is another grass-roots Vermont effort to break down barriers of distrust and to work on a people-to-people basis for peace in our world."

Sanders said he hoped that various exchange programs between the two cities involving teachers, health care workers, students, artists and athletes could begin soon. "As more and more people see the so-called 'enemy' face-to-face, the easier it is for us here to reduce the obscene federal military budget,

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to reverse the arms race once, and to build a process for solving our disputes peacefully," he said. Sanders said that, if elected to Congress, he would push for greater federal funding of people-to-people exchanges of all types with the Soviet Union. "Think of the peace-making possibilities if we could tap just one percent of the Pentagon's budget to foster Sister city programs, exchanges, and joint economic development projects," Sanders said.

Sanders noted that in his budget-balancing plan released last week he advocated significant cuts in the military budget as a first step in re-ordering the Reagan administration's priorities. "We need a new set of national priorities to deal with real human needs," he said. "The nations of the world are spending five cents on education for every dollar they spend on arms; it's time for the United States to assume leadership for reversing this wasteful and morally bankrupt policy."

"We cannot continue to seek peace through weapons development, Star Wars, and nerve gas. Lasting peace can be achieved through respectful diplomacy, through positive economic development at home and abroad, and through bold reductions of nuclear and conventional weapons by the major powers," he said.

The Sister City effort with Yaroslavl will be Sanders' second international program in his tenure. In 1984 Mayor Sanders helped establish a Sister City tie with Puerto Cabezas on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua where he visited in July of 1985.