Mobilizing health professionals on issues that represent the gravest dangers to human health.

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

Mobilizing health professionals on issues that represent the gravest dangers to human health.
From our vantage point in the spring of 2021, we might look back at the past year and realize how far off our predictions for 2020 were. Whether it was the pandemic, the degree of social unrest, the electoral outcomes, or severe weather events, we became more and more aware that our usual definitions of “normal” had been replaced. Were we deluding ourselves to think the future was predictable, and would be stable?

What is predictable—and not delusional—is the strength, resilience, and importance of Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) and of our supporters. Yes, the world of health care and progressive action has recently lost two of our founders, Jack Geiger and Bernie Lown. But, through your personal ethos, integrity, and efforts, you carry on the traditions woven into the fabric of PSR over so many years. Through your community involvement and leadership, you reaffirm daily the impact that a small group of like-minded, tireless, and pragmatic idealists can have on society.

You make it possible for our national and chapter staff and activists to achieve goals and influence well above our size. Take a look at our web site—and the web sites of our chapters—to view the breadth and depth of what we contribute to our world. Standing with indigenous peoples against pipelines, not backing down from the fracking industry, educating communities about the risk of indoor air pollution from gas stoves, organizing for environmental and social justice. Continuing the fight against nuclear weapons through Back from the Brink, Masks not Missiles, and regional and international coalitions, we lead the fight against ignorance and apathy about the existential threats to all life.

So, thank you for your work, and for your support of PSR. We hope we give you courage in your efforts. We know that you give us both that courage, and also the resources, to carry on the fight.

FROM CRISIS TO A BETTER FUTURE

FROM PSR PRESIDENT ALAN GREENGLASS
As I reflect upon last year, it’s overwhelming to think about how much the world has changed since the beginning of 2020, starting with the disruption triggered by COVID-19, and the staggering loss of life resulting from this pandemic. We lost over 350,000 Americans to the disease in 2020, and about 1.8 million people worldwide—and those numbers continued to rise distressingly during the first few months of 2021. We’ve experienced a collective trauma—and, for many, a very personal one—and one we will be living with for a generation. But that wasn’t the only shock to the system in 2020, as we saw a resurgence in demands for racial justice, following the grotesque murder of George Floyd in May.

While these events brought unprecedented disruption and hardship, they also made the work we do at PSR feel more vital than ever. I’m proud of what PSR accomplished in 2020. I’m also encouraged by what I’ve seen during the first few months of 2021, in particular with regard to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ). I’ve written recently on why dismantling systemic racism needs to be at the core of what we do at PSR, as it has been a major contributor to the policies and institutions that have led us to the brink of global destruction. The events of 2020 motivated our staff to put in place an ambitious racial justice plan to guide all of PSR’s operations. Each of PSR’s major programs now include annual assessments of potential impacts of program activities on communities of color, and will explicitly incorporate racial justice goals or objectives into its program plans.

The events of 2020 also gave us the opportunity to gain new partners and deepen our existing partnerships. In particular, we are grateful for the opportunity to work with Organizations in Solidarity, which has organized the nuclear weapons field to take action on racial justice. I currently co-chair their workgroup on developing processes for hiring individuals from local and low-income communities.

I have a strong sense of optimism heading into 2021, because so many PSR members—and others, throughout the country—have made it a priority to confront the persistent racial injustice afflicting this country, even in the midst of combating a deadly pandemic, while maintaining an even stronger commitment to our core work: to protect human life from the threat of climate change, environmental health, and nuclear weapons.

With gratitude and hope,
A YEAR OF RECKONING

The year 2020 shocked us, but it also challenged, galvanized, and inspired us. It was the year that let us know that, for better or worse, we are all connected. We’re all impacted by the forces that shape our world, whether it’s:

- A virus,
- Injustice,
- Environmental catastrophe,
- Poverty, or
- Disinformation.

As an organization, we learned some hard lessons and confirmed truths about the inadequacy of our public healthcare system and the devastating consequences of structural racism that we knew existed, but never fully understood.

The year 2020 showed us how far the distance is between where we are and where we believe ourselves to be as a country.

The struggle to address this chasm will be some of the hardest work we’ve ever done, but in the end, we will all be better for it.
Photo (L to R): “Life-Matters” from Pexels, A. Shekhovtcova from Pexels, A. Piacqua from Pexels, “Stop Asian Hate” from Getty, “Life Matters” from Pexels, Rodnae Productions from Pexels
Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, PSR continued to make significant progress toward fulfilling our mission. Below are some highlights from the past year.

**A PSR lawsuit overturned EPA limits on scientific advisory boards:**
A lawsuit in which PSR was the lead plaintiff overturned the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) efforts to block scientists who currently receive EPA grant money from serving on EPA science advisory committees.

**A PSR report found that gas stoves release dangerous levels of indoor pollution:**
PSR co-authored a new report, which documents dangerous levels of indoor air pollution from gas stoves. The report presents scientific evidence that gas stoves release several hazardous pollutants, notably nitrogen dioxide and carbon monoxide, and that the level of nitrogen dioxide in your kitchen can easily reach levels that exceed the EPA’s air quality standards for outdoor air. Read the report at [https://www.psr.org/blog/resource/health-effects-from-gas-stove-pollution/](https://www.psr.org/blog/resource/health-effects-from-gas-stove-pollution/)

**PSR led a virtual event to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki with 150+ organizations:**
In 1945, the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki resulted in the deaths of an estimated 200,000 men, women, and children. In 2020, PSR led a nationwide coalition of over 150 organizations to honor the survivors of these bombings—the “Hibakusha”—and to remind the world that 75 years after the first nuclear weapons were used, those survivors—and nuclear weapons—are #stillhere. On August 6 and August 9, a live virtual event shined a spotlight on creative projects and local events around the country, as well as the voices of activists and stories of survivors.

**PSR celebrated 50 ratifications for the TPNW:**
On October 24, United Nations Day, Honduras became the 50th nation to ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), paving the way for the treaty to officially enter into force on January 22, 2021. This long-sought-after treaty changes the legal status of nuclear weapons in international law and marks a historic milestone for a decades-long, intergenerational movement to abolish nuclear weapons. PSR stands with those first 50 forward-looking nations to ratify the treaty, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) and its partner organizations, and everyone who played a role in achieving this victory.

**PSR won a landmark victory to stop fracking on public land in Wyoming:**
In November, a federal court ruled that the U.S. Department of the Interior’s Bureau of Land Management (BLM), in violation of federal law, failed to disclose the climate impacts of leasing more than 300,000 acres of public lands for fracking and oil and gas extraction in Wyoming. The decision declares the sale of those oil and gas leases illegal and blocks future drilling on that acreage, which comes to 475 square miles. This decision upholds the lawsuit PSR and our co-plaintiffs, Wild Earth Guardians and the Western Environmental Law Center, initially won in March 2019. That ruling, issued by Judge Rudolph Contreras of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, was hailed as a landmark victory for the climate.

**Congress eliminated funding for nuclear weapons tests:**
Within the $740.5 billion military budget for 2020, $10 million was slated to prepare the Nevada test site to resume nuclear weapons tests after a 28-year hiatus. However, thanks to PSR members who prevailed upon the negotiators—especially Senator Jack Reed of Rhode Island—the testing allocation was cut from the House-Senate compromise budget that Congress ultimately sent to President Trump.
PSR initiated an expanded building electrification effort:
A joint project between PSR’s national organization and five PSR chapters yielded significant policy shifts, including the implementation of a new energy code in Seattle, a more inclusive pilot project in Los Angeles, a public education campaign in Colorado, and new coalitions in Boston and Pennsylvania.

PSR was instrumental in delivering key votes in support of legislation to reduce military spending:
The Senate and House proposed amendments to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that would cut 10% ($74 billion) from the overall military budget and redirect those funds into COVID-19 relief-related programs. Senator Bernie Sanders (VT) repeatedly invoked PSR’s support when promoting his 10% cut amendment on the Senate floor.

PSR co-released the Seventh Edition of the “Fracking Compendium,” highlighting fracking health risks:
The “Compendium of Scientific, Medical, and Media Findings Demonstrating Risks and Harms of Fracking” compiles and summarizes nearly 2,000 medical, scientific, governmental, and investigative articles on fracking’s harms to health. This unique volume is compiled and written by volunteers from Concerned Health Professionals of New York and edited by volunteers from PSR.

PSR held its first virtual gala in November:
While we were disappointed not to be able to come together in person, we were able to raise over $70,000 at our first-ever virtual event, and engage with our members and guests in exciting new ways. The event featured recorded remarks by H.E. Elayne Whyte Gómez of the Costa Rican Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who successfully presided over the 2017 negotiations at the United Nations on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons; a performance by concert violinist Mari Sato, performing the song “Filter” by award-winning composer, Daniel Bernard Roumain; and a video presentation highlighting the varied efforts and initiatives PSR chapters across the country put in place to respond to the challenges of COVID-19, and racial injustice, while continuing our environmental and nuclear weapons abolition work.
In 2020, PSR’s Nuclear Weapons Abolition Program worked to advance three overarching goals:

- Increasing popular support for policies aimed at reducing the nuclear weapons threat.
- Convincing Congress to take actions that reduce the threat of nuclear weapons, block new investments in nuclear weapons programs, and/or move us closer toward their total elimination.
- Building a stronger health voice on the need to move toward nuclear disarmament.

In 2020, these goals were paired with a commitment to ensuring that the communities with whom we worked reflect PSR’s organizational diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) priorities. By the end of the year, 87% of PSR chapters working with us reported that they had “pushed for social justice, racial justice, and environmental justice-related policy issues” in 2020.

While the pandemic posed challenges to implementing many of our initiatives, we were able to pivot our programmatic efforts and move forward. Our accomplishments this year:

- PSR led a nationwide coalition of over 150 organizations to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This initiative came to be identified with the hashtag #stillhere to honor the survivors of the attack and to acknowledge that both they—and nuclear weapons—are still here. PSR was instrumental in ensuring the #stillhere coalition position statement included support for the global elimination of nuclear weapons. The statement was signed by 170 organizations, including the Sunrise Movement, Roots Action, Sierra Club, many of the organizations within Alliance for Nuclear Accountability, and 17 PSR chapters. Working with our partners, PSR staff created a big tent coalition centered on standing in solidarity with nuclear victims and amplifying the voices of communities who have been harmed by the development, testing, and use of these weapons. Ultimately, this coalition successfully unified the U.S. arms control, disarmament and abolition groups, and spawned local organizers across 32 states to create 130 virtual and in-person commemoration, related events (nearly double the number of 2019 events).

- PSR joined the People Over Pentagon coalition as part of a new strategy to build support for nuclear weapons
abolition from the frame of “Masks not Missiles,” first coined by Washington PSR. This was PSR’s first collaboration with the coalition of over 60 organizations asking Congress to keep any Pentagon funding out of COVID-19 relief bills. This coalition supported Senate (Sanders, Markey, Warren) and House (Pocan, Lee) efforts to add an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that would cut 10% ($74 billion) from the overall military budget and redirect those funds into programs to help Americans beleaguered by the pandemic and economic distress. This effort motivated the Bay Area, Arizona and Maryland chapters to bring their lobbying up to a new level, including participation in national-level, organizing calls.

Although the amendment was eventually defeated, the effort demonstrated our increased ability to mobilize a broader base of support around PSR priorities.

Leading members of this coalition, like Public Citizen, are increasingly using nuclear weapons spending as a key example of an over-reliance on militarism at the expense of programs that would directly help American’s weather the impact of COVID-19.
In 2020, PSR's Environment & Health (E&H) Program worked to advance three overarching goals:

- Moving the U.S. away from fracked gas (methane) as a major energy source.

- Urging states and local jurisdictions to commit to 100% clean, renewable energy in the electricity sector by 2035.

- Protecting federal policies and programs for clean air and addressing climate change and maintaining the EPA’s funding and powers at levels that protect human health and implement these policies fully.

- Helping U.S. health professionals understand climate change as a global health crisis, advise their patients about this, and advocate for urgent, large-scale mitigation and adaptation actions to protect human health and survival.

In planning our 2020 activities, we deepened our efforts to incorporate diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) throughout our programming work. Our accomplishments this year:


- PSR commissioned two reports on undisclosed toxic fracking chemicals, written by environmental researcher Dusty Horwitt. These reports, to be published in 2021, explore the use of perfluorinated chemicals in fracking and the effort to prevent disclosure of these dangerous chemicals.

- PSR completed a report on the impact of fracking-related air pollution on susceptibility to COVID-19 with well-known health researcher Lisa McKenzie, Ph.D. MPH, and Pennsylvania PSR activist Ned Ketyer, MD.

- Our PSR staff and Greater Boston PSR partnered with Sierra Club, Rocky Mountain Institute, and Mothers Out Front to create a groundbreaking report on the harmful health effects of gas stoves. This report was featured in 33 media outlets, including Scientific American and Vox. You can read the report at https://www.psr.org/blog/resource/health-effects-from-gas-stove-pollution/.

The commercial and residential building sector accounts for 39% of carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions in the United States per year, more than any other sector. Most of these emissions come from the combustion of fossil fuels to provide heating, cooling and lighting, and to power appliances and electrical equipment.*

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• PSR recruited 115 Climate Ambassadors, exceeding our annual target by 35%. Ambassadors wrote op-ed articles, submitted letters to the editor, and testified publicly in defense of health-protective policies on our Environment & Health priorities.

• PSR prevailed in two critical lawsuits: reversing fracking activity on 453 acres of public lands in Wyoming, and retaining critical scientist participation on EPA advisory committees.

Building electrification is an important new movement in the fight against climate change. In 2020, PSR staff helped coordinate building electrification activities with four PSR Chapters.

• Washington PSR played a key role in a major win: Seattle’s adoption of a revised energy code that will phase out the use of gas in furnaces and other appliances in commercial and large multi-family apartment buildings.

• The Greater Boston PSR chapter emerged as a leading advocate for replacing gas for home heating and cooking with ground-source heat pumps. The innovative development of utility-scale ground-source heat pumps allows them to engage with utility companies as partners in the transition to clean energy.

• Colorado PSR created three professionally produced videos to inform the general public, Spanish-language speakers, and decision-makers about indoor air pollution and health impacts from burning gas for cooking and heating in the home. They distributed them broadly through digital and social media platforms and over public access television stations.

• PSR Pennsylvania became the health voice in the new coalition “Housing Equity Repair and Electrification 4 Climate Justice.” The chapter is helping the coalition demonstrate why electrification plus home repairs is critical for the health, environment, and economy of Philadelphians and is an essential anti-displacement strategy.


Replacing gas-burning furnaces, water heaters, and stoves with efficient electric alternatives—known as “building electrification”—is a bright new path to reducing our nation’s carbon emissions. That’s because, in the coming years, our nation’s electricity will be produced from clean, healthy renewable sources, not fossil fuels.

**Oregon PSR** led the implementation of Portland’s new Clean Energy Fund, America’s first-ever municipal climate justice fund. Under this initiative, large corporations contribute one percent of annual gross revenue to a locally managed fund to support local clean energy, energy efficiency, and climate justice projects. The Fund prioritizes grants to projects that serve low-income communities and communities of color.

PSR chapters and individual health professionals in key states joined our national organization office in urging the governors of New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and Delaware to oppose a proposed export terminal as a threat to public health, safety and the climate. PSR’s health voice helped win a key delay in the proposal to build a liquefied natural gas (LNG) export facility on the Delaware River, just south of Philadelphia.

**Washington PSR** worked with members of the United Against Nuclear War (UANW) coalition to line up 320 organizations in support of legislation to restore Medicaid to the people of Marshall Islands, and other Compact of Free Association (COFA) states.

**PSR Florida** held a webinar with Congresswoman Kathy Castor, chair of the U.S. House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis, and Florida health professionals on the frontlines of the climate crisis to learn more about the recommendations in the Committee’s majority report, “Solving the Climate Crisis,” released in June.

**PSR Arizona** launched the first of a series of comprehensive virtual “Building Resilient Neighborhoods” (BRN) workshop for Climate Tucson members. The workshop covered all the steps needed to be prepared for the dangers of excessive heat, from keeping yourself and others safe from dangerous and often fatal heat-related illnesses to the supplies and resources required in case of the worst-case scenario: an extended power outage.

**Greater Boston PSR (GBPSR)** members co-authored “The False Promise of Natural Gas,” which was published in the New England Journal of Medicine. This article worked in concert with GBPSR’s successful campaign to create and shepherd to passage a resolution by the Massachusetts Medical Society noting the link between gas stoves and childhood asthma.

**Washington PSR and Oregon PSR** co-led the Pacific Northwest “Power Past Fracked Gas” coalition, playing critical roles in securing Washington Governor Inslee’s opposition to these projects and blocking permits for several major proposed fracked gas infrastructure projects, including two to export liquefied natural gas (LNG).

**PSR-Los Angeles** helped create the Climate Emergency Office in Los Angeles. The establishment of this office, in conjunction with the chapter’s work on climate, helped bring those most in danger from climate change to the policy table.

**PSR-Los Angeles**’s leadership in assessing and disseminating the ways in which rapid building electrification would harm low-income people and people of color is playing an important role in shaping PSR’s electrification work in the coming year.

**Philadelphia PSR** helped arrange a meeting between Governor Wolf and affected families from a southwest Pennsylvania cancer cluster, leading the governor to pledge $3 million to research the health effects of fracking in the state.

**PSR Colorado** was successful in engaging a variety of community groups (Moms Clean Air Force, Green Latinos, Women from the Mountain, North Range Concerned Citizens, and Spirit of the Sun) on topics including healthy electric homes and environmental racism. The chapter also spoke about electrification and health on Spanish-language community online talk shows and radio.
Six chapters—Washington, Oregon, Arizona, Florida, Maine and Texas—conducted public education and/or placed LTEs, op-eds and/or media interviews on climate change issues. Texas PSR also reached agreements with several medical specialty associations to support clean energy initiatives and actions on climate and to craft a resolution to create a task force at the Texas Medical Association that will advocate for sensible environmental health policy.

Thanks to efforts by our national team and PSR Iowa, Des Moines Mayor Frank Cownie issued a proclamation in support of nuclear weapons policies that echoed those of the Back from the Brink initiative, while also noting the $39 million nuclear weapons tax burden on citizens of Des Moines for Fiscal Year 2020. The Mayor also called upon the U.S. to welcome the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Cownie was the U.S. Vice President of Mayors for Peace in 2020.

Washington PSR has been leading a coalition to ensure that implementation of the state’s 100% clean electricity policy, passed last year, results in an equitable transition. Washington also convened medical associations and hospitals to support updated greenhouse gas emission targets for the state.

Arizona PSR helped persuade the Arizona Corporation Commission to incorporate a just transition away from dirty energy sources and toward renewable fuel into the utility’s new Integrated Resource Plan (IRP).
2020 FINANCIALS

Support & Revenue

- Contributions & Grants: 69% ($858,223)
- Membership Dues: 16% ($196,666)
- Paycheck Protection Program Grant: 14% ($176,982)
- Other Income: <1% ($18,476)
- TOTAL INCOME: $1,250,346

Expenses

- Program Services: 70% ($1,008,249)
- Management & General: 17% ($243,727)
- Fundraising: 7% ($95,374)
- Chapter Support: 6% ($90,113)
- TOTAL EXPENSES: $1,437,463

Photo "Life-Matters" from Pexels
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On December 28, 2020, PSR and the world lost Dr. H. Jack Geiger, a pioneer in the field of social medicine and a co-founder and former president of PSR.

Dr. Geiger was a co-author of one of the first articles to look at the medical costs of nuclear war. Published in The New England Journal of Medicine in 1962, it convincingly described the humanitarian disaster that would occur in the event of a nuclear strike on Boston, Massachusetts. As one longtime PSR member wrote, “He was a great inspiration for me. Changed my life. And [his] message is still relevant.”

Dr. Geiger’s work was driven by his passion for justice. He was not only a founding member of PSR, but also Physicians for Human Rights. As a young man, he fought racial injustice at the University of Chicago, helping to organize faculty and students in protest against Black patients being shut out of certain hospitals, and qualified Black students being rejected by the medical school. Later, after becoming a doctor, he was a pioneer in the community health center movement, co-founding community health centers in Boston and in the Mississippi Delta that served as models for a national network of clinics that today serves millions of low-income patients.

Dr. Geiger’s remarks at the closing session of the American Public Health Association’s (APHA) annual meeting in 1985 still resonate powerfully today, as our nation struggles to meet the health needs of a population stricken by the COVID-19 pandemic:

“If we somehow suspended the arms race and expenditures on it for a year, we could, I am confident, pay for every proposal made at every session at this meeting of APHA, the last meeting of APHA, and the meeting of APHA next year still to come, and have money left over for further efforts to prevent death, ease suffering and save lives throughout the world.”

The Board and Staff of PSR extend our sincere condolences to Dr. Geiger’s family and loving friends as we remember his remarkable life.