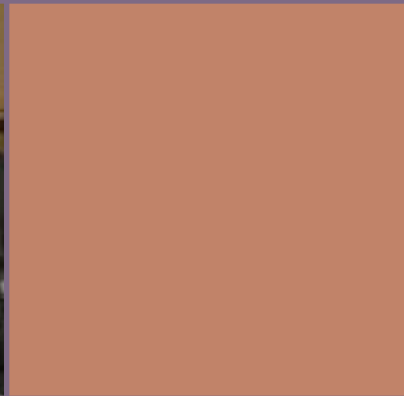




Annual Report 2009



Repower VT



FROM THE DIRECTOR



As I look back over 2009, I can't help but be humbled by the outstanding support of our members and impressed by the ingenuity of our staff and volunteers.

As you can see in our financial report (p.9), VPIRG raised more money in 2009 than we ever have before. The vast majority of that support came as individual gifts from you, our members. In the midst of the toughest economy in generations, that is an extraordinary expression of belief in the work we do.

A number of our members told me that the reason why they decided to increase their giving at this difficult time was because they knew VPIRG was leading the way on one, two or even several issues that they really cared about. Whether they wanted to see Vermont Yankee retired, health care made more affordable, or unsafe products removed from store shelves, they were confident that by giving to VPIRG they were investing in real solutions.

As you'll see in the pages that follow, we did deliver results. And while many of the tactics we use to get things done are tried and true, we're not afraid to shake things up either. For instance, when our staff considered how we might effectively demonstrate support for clean energy among the people we talk with as part of our summer outreach campaign, we decided to use technology to our advantage.

VPIRG canvassers used digital cameras to capture our members at their homes, holding a simple message that called for repowering Vermont and retiring Vermont Yankee. We then delivered copies of the photos — over 6,000 in all — to state legislators with powerful effect.

This traditional grassroots organizing combined with an innovative use of new technology is part of what keeps our work fresh and our campaigns successful. But we could do none of this without you, so once again, thank you!

Paul Burns, Executive Director

“You haven't really known Vermont until you've struggled your way up a rushing stream that used to be a driveway, to find at the top a family that invites you to share a slice of blueberry pie as you talk about the state's energy future.”

— Anika James, 3-year veteran VPIRG canvasser

ABOUT VPIRG AND VPIREF:

Founded in 1972, the Vermont Public Interest Research Group (VPIRG) is the largest nonprofit consumer and environmental advocacy organization in the state. As a 501(c) 4 nonprofit advocacy group, VPIRG conducts non-partisan public interest advocacy in support of priority public interest issues and campaigns and seeks legislative and policy solutions to issues affecting Vermonters. Donations to VPIRG are not tax deductible.

VPIRG established the Vermont Public Interest Research and Education Fund (VPIREF) in 1975 as its 501(c) 3 outreach and education arm in order to conduct independent research and public

education on the range of issues on which we work. Donations to VPIREF are tax deductible.

For 37 years, we have brought the voice of Vermont citizens to public policy debates concerning the environment, health care, consumer protection and democracy. The common mission of VPIRG and VPIREF is to promote and protect the health of Vermont's people, environment and locally-based economy by informing and mobilizing citizens statewide. VPIRG advocates and organizers use independent research, policy analysis, public outreach and grassroots mobilization to design and implement effective strategies for each of our campaigns.

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VPIRG's Field Team: Combining new technology with solid grassroots organizing

What distinguishes VPIRG is the strength and effectiveness of our grassroots organizing. As the largest statewide citizen advocacy organization in Vermont, we have the ability to inspire, educate and empower people to participate directly in shaping the future they want for themselves and their children.

In 2009, VPIRG had its biggest and most successful summer outreach program ever. By blending new technology with good old grassroots organizing we were able to really earn our tag line: "Vermont's Voice." Using small digital cameras, our summer staff talked with over 30,000 Vermonters about how we can achieve a clean energy future. Almost 6,000 volunteered to have their picture taken holding a small blue sign with a big idea: "Repower Vermont — Replace VT Yankee." These photos were then combined into a giant mosaic image on a banner (see photo below) and the individual photo messages were sent to legislators so they could see just who and how many of their constituents were supporting VPIRG's campaign.

Building on the summer's success, VPIRG's field team mobilized members and supporters throughout the fall to participate in community forums on Vermont's energy future and also on health care reform. In November at the annual Environmental Action Conference, VPIRG co-sponsored the first gubernatorial candidates' forum of the 2010 election season.

The year closed with the debut of VPIRG's brand new website with improved online action tools and resources for citizen activists. If you haven't visited yet we hope you will — www.vpirg.org.



FACTS:

- 2847 Vermonters became NEW members of VPIRG during our summer outreach program
- 125 Towns were visited by VPIRG's summer outreach program
- 5,668 Repower VT - Retire VT Yankee photo petitions taken and over 13,000 copies delivered to legislators
- 134 Action Alerts were sent to VPIRG's over 10,000 member email list
- 5216 activists took action sending out 10,804 messages to decision-makers

Security and affordability are top priorities

Federal Health Care reform captured the headlines and kept thousands of people glued to cable news to watch the twists and turns of a public policy debate that would rival the best TV soap opera. VPIRG played a leading role in organizing support among Vermonters for meaningful reform at the federal level while pressing for tangible victories right here at home.

Continuing our work as the state leader for Health Care for America NOW!, our advocates and field staff communicated almost daily with the staff of our federal delegation to funnel messages from the grassroots as Congress debated. In March, VPIRG was invited to take part in one of the Obama Administration's seven national health care forums. At the forum, Health Care Advocate Susan Baker delivered over 200 comments from VPIRG members to White House officials. Throughout the summer, VPIRG organized media events and co-sponsored local forums with state legislators and community leaders to gather stories and statistics about Vermonters' day-to-day struggles to access affordable health care.

At the state level, legislators were cautious in the face of pending federal reforms and severe budgetary constraints. But we were still successful in protecting key programs from being slashed and broadening access to

affordable care for those who need it most. We also passed the nation's toughest ban on gifts from big drug makers to doctors.



VPIRG Executive Director, Paul Burns with Congressman Peter Welch

FACTS:

According to a 2007 report by the American Medical Association, Vermont's largest health insurer holds a 77 percent share of the market. The U.S. Justice Department considers a market "highly concentrated" if one company holds more than a 42 percent share of that market.

REPORTS RELEASED:

Vermont Health Plan Premiums Soar as Providers Face Less Competition — May 2009

The \$3 Trillion Question: What health care reform can save for families, businesses and taxpayers — August 2009

Uncovered: How America's Health Care System Fails Young People — November 2009

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Passed the nation's toughest crackdown on gifts to doctors from manufacturers of prescription drugs, medical devices and biological products. The gift ban includes free meals and entertainment.
- Passed legislation that expanded coverage for oral cancer treatment, provided access to health care for VT farm workers, and extended coverage through Catamount Health to struggling self-employed business owners and Vermonters burdened by high deductible private insurance policies.
- Passed a bill to ensure that colon cancer screenings are affordable for those who are at risk.
- Ran a series of television ads urging our federal delegation to fight for the public option in the federal health care bill.
- VPIREF was instrumental in bringing to the attention of legislators the fact that Vermont ran the risk of losing its eligibility for stimulus funds through the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act if the Douglas Administration's proposed cuts to state health care programs were to occur. Upon learning of the potential impact, the funding was restored.
- VPIRG's review of health insurance company annual rate requests uncovered errors that were later admitted to and corrected by insurer MVP, saving consumers and the state money by reducing premium increases by more than half.
- Gathered over 200 citizen comments on health care reform in just two days when asked by the Obama Administration to participate in one of the four regional health care forums held around the country.

“VPIRG believes that we must find common ground with those who share this interest in meaningful health care reform because we simply cannot afford to wait any longer, and we cannot afford to fail.”

— VPIRG Advocate Susan Baker, March 16, 2009

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Passed major new legislation phasing out the use of the toxic flame retardant Deca in a broad range of consumer products including furniture, TVs and computers.
- Gained new protections for our waterways by passing legislation to support stricter control over so-called junk yards that are a major source of pollution.
- Helped to launch a new public education tool concerning toxins in consumer products — www.HealthyStuff.org.
- Authored and released a new report on the dangers of bisphenol A (BPA), a chemical used in a variety of common products that has been linked to reproductive and developmental disorders and cancer.
- Built support for legislation to provide responsible and affordable recycling of “e-waste” including all those old computer parts and TVs cluttering up your basement.



Environmental Health Advocate, Charity Carbine-March with our firefighter allies at the State House



New partners bring success

At VPIRG, we're always looking to form partnerships with unusual allies — the kind of allies who will help us demonstrate a breadth of support for the solutions we're promoting. In 2009 we found the perfect partners in the Professional Firefighters of Vermont as we sought to replace the use of a toxic flame retardant called Deca with safer alternatives. Deca is used in a broad range of consumer products from TVs and computers to residential furniture.

The firefighters were a powerful voice in favor of the bill that VPIRG advocate Charity Carbine-March had helped to craft. Matt Vinci, President of the Professional Firefighters of Vermont also exposed a huge robo-call campaign against the bill as “nothing but a front for the chemical industry that is profiting by putting firefighters in Vermont at risk of harm unnecessarily.”

The firefighters, together with our coalition partners in the Alliance for a Clean and Healthy Vermont, succeeded in passing the bill which will mean safer products for consumers and a lower risk for firefighters on the job.

In addition to success in the State House, VPIRG also helped expand the membership and activity of the Alliance which has become a statewide resource for parents, teachers, health care professionals and elected officials. We also joined with partners at the Central Vermont Humane Society to promote a new, user-friendly website — www.HealthyStuff.org that shows which consumer products — including those for your pet — contain potentially dangerous toxic chemicals.

“...Vermont must be proactive. Vermonters are being exposed to toxins everyday and it is taking a toll on the health of our citizens. What we need is a new and comprehensive approach to chemical safety at the state level.”

— Rep. Willem Jewett of Ripton (D)

FACTS:

BPA is a synthetic estrogen that can have toxic effects on the body even at low dose exposures. Over 90% of the more than 100 government-funded studies on low dose exposures to BPA have resulted in adverse health effects.

Source: F. Vom Saal, W. Welshons, Environmental Research 100:50-76. 2006.

REPORTS RELEASED:

Toxic Flame Retardants: The Impact of Deca on Health and the Environment — February 2009

Protecting Vermont's Children from Poor Indoor Air Quality: A Report Card on Act 125 — Sept 2009

Over Exposed: The Impacts of BPA on Public Health — December 2009

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Visit the Alliance for a Clean and Healthy Vermont at: www.alliancevt.org

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- President Obama sided with VPIRG and our allies in overturning a Bush administration policy blocking Vermont and 13 other states from moving ahead with “clean cars” programs. VPIRG was instrumental in getting the program adopted in Vermont in 2005.
- Passed major new legislation creating the first-in-the-nation statewide standard offer (a.k.a. feed-in tariff). A standard offer provides financial certainty to developers who seek to build the renewable energy projects that Vermonters want. This legislation will jumpstart construction of up to 50 megawatts of clean renewable power. The same legislation also:
 - Enables towns to create clean energy assessment districts to help property owners finance energy efficiency and renewable energy projects through their property taxes.
 - Directed \$30 million dollars of federal economic recovery money to the Vermont Clean Energy Development Fund. Consumers, businesses and towns can apply for financial support for clean energy projects.
 - Strengthened Vermont’s building efficiency standards and preserved funding for this key program.

FACTS:

Vermont’s clean cars program is expected to reduce the state’s global warming pollution by 3.2 million metric tons — the equivalent of eliminating the pollution from 602,000 cars for a year — and save consumers \$631,804 at the pump by 2020.

REPORTS RELEASED:

Repowering Vermont — Replacing Vermont Yankee for a Clean Energy Future — Summer 2009

Clean Energy Guidebook: Understanding Vermont’s Clean Energy Resources — Fall 2009

The Repowering of Vermont begins in earnest

VPIRG’s flagship clean energy program picked up steam in 2009 with the passage of new legislation to jumpstart renewable energy development. Directed by advocate James Moore, the program also produced a major research report providing a specific road map to Vermont’s clean energy future.

At the State House, VPIRG worked closely with a diverse group of House and Senate leaders including Rep. Tony Klein (D-E. Montpelier) and Rep. Joe Krawczyk (R-Bennington), the chair and vice chair respectively of the House Natural Resources and Energy Committee, which led to the adoption of a first-of-its-kind clean energy bill to support community scale renewable energy projects.

VPIRG’s summer outreach program once again focused on delivering a positive message that repowering Vermont is possible and replacing Vermont Yankee is essential if the state is to claim a leadership role in the coming green economic revolution.



Clean Energy Advocate James Moore delivers testimony in the House Natural Resources & Energy Committee

“I’m proud to have played a leadership role in passing legislation that will support new clean energy projects in communities across the state. Renewable energy is important for our nation’s security, our state’s economic growth and the health of our environment.”

—Rep. Joe Krawczyk of Bennington (R)

Tide of public opinion turns against VT Yankee



REPLACING VERMONT YANKEE

Kicking off the New Year with a press conference offering a detailed critique of the state's assessment of VT Yankee's reliability, VPIRG coordinated a statewide campaign that dogged Entergy Nuclear, the plant's out-of-state corporate owners, at every turn. From halting the company's misleading ads to exposing the lies of its corporate executives to bringing public forums about Vermont's energy future to every corner



Safepower VT coalition partner, Chris Williams, speaking at the State House

of the state, VPIRG staff and volunteer activists raised public awareness and held the media's attention all year.

VPIRG coordinated community forums and meetings in 40 towns giving citizens the opportunity to hear both sides of this controversial issue and building support for retiring VT Yankee on schedule in 2012.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- VPIRG blew the whistle on Entergy Corporation's false ads promoting the troubled Vermont Yankee plant as "clean, safe and reliable." We appealed directly to VT Attorney General Bill Sorrell who, in early 2009 agreed that Entergy's claim that the plant has zero carbon emissions was demonstrably false. Entergy agreed to change its ads.
- VPIRG and our statewide coalition partners prevented the legislature from voting in support of a 20-year extension on VT Yankee's operating license.
- Helped to expose the VT Dept. of Health's plan to change the "fence line" radiation standards to favor VT Yankee.
- Coordinated the "Vermont's Energy Future: It's Our Choice" rally at the State House drawing hundreds of activists.
- Helped pass a VT Yankee decommissioning bill to hold Entergy Nuclear and not Vermont tax payers responsible for cleaning up the plant when it closes, but Gov. Douglas once again vetoed the bill.
- VPIRG was an active and vocal participant in all the deliberations by the Public Service Board on re-licensing VT Yankee.

"We have an opportunity to show, not only the country, but the rest of the world that those people who say it can't be done are dead wrong."

— Chris Williams, Citizens Awareness Network on closing VT Yankee on schedule

FACTS:

VPIRG's petition to the Attorney General concerning Entergy's false ads that began running in 2008 noted that the plant was anything but "safe and reliable." In fact, a partial list of the plant's accidents, mishaps and catastrophic failures as of late 2008 included the following:

- Leak in water pipe and damaged brackets in areas that were inspected and rebuilt one year ago after a major cooling tower collapse; power output reduced to 47% of capacity (July, 2008)
- A defective pump prompted ENVY to reduce power to 93% (June 2008)
- Crane dropped a concrete storage cask, which carries highly radioactive spent fuel assemblies, four inches to the floor (May 2008)
- During a planned April evacuation exercise, faltering two-way radios meant many buses were not dispatched to assisted living facilities and day care centers (May 2008)
- Security violations in February cited by NRC (May 2008)
- Condenser tube leak triggered plant shutdown (April 2008)
- Stop valve malfunction triggers shutdown (August 2007)
- Timber supporting water pipe gave way triggering catastrophic cooling tower section collapse (August 2007)
- Cracks in steam dryer total 62 (as of November 2005)
- Electric insulator breaks and causes shutdown (July 2005)
- Malfunctioning emergency notification system (June 2004)
- Major transformer fire led to emergency shutdown (June 2004)



VPIRG: defending democracy and consumers

Campaign finance and election reform stalled again

Early in the 2009 legislative session, the state Senate passed a bill to re-establish commonsense limits on political contributions to candidates from individuals, businesses, political parties and political action committees. Unfortunately, the House of Representatives never took up the measure for consideration. Neither the House nor the Senate took any action on other VPIRG priorities including a bill to allow Election Day Registration and a proposal to require candidates for statewide office to submit basic financial information so that voters can be made aware of any potential conflicts of interest.

Not so civil discourse

On September 9, 2009, Rep. Joe Wilson, Republican of South Carolina, disgraced himself by screaming out “You lie!” as President Obama addressed a Joint Session of Congress concerning the need to pass a comprehensive health care reform plan. That was certainly a low point for civil discourse in our democracy. And while many political leaders quickly distanced themselves from Wilson’s outburst, Rob Roper, the head of VT’s Republican Party, immediately jumped on the Wilson bandwagon saying that, “I have little confidence that this was anything more than a lie convincingly delivered.” [Burlington Free Press, September 10, 2009]

In response to Roper’s remarks, VPIRG’s Executive Director Paul Burns noted that, “There’s plenty of room for honest debate and divergent opinions about the president’s plan.” But he went on to urge Vermont Republicans to “...demand that [Roper] apologize, just as his discredited compatriot from South Carolina had the good sense to do.”

VPIRG’s director named to selection panel for new judge

VPIRG’s Executive Director Paul Burns was chosen by Sen. Bernie Sanders to serve on a special nine-member search committee formed in 2009 to identify and recommend candidates to replace retiring U.S. District Court Judge J. Garvan Murtha. Judge Murtha served as one of Vermont’s two federal judges for 13 years.

The search committee considered applications, conducted interviews and make recommendations for a new judge to Senators Patrick Leahy and Sanders. Sen. Leahy later narrowed the list and made his own recommendations to President Obama, who nominated state Judge Christina Reiss to fill the vacancy. Judge Reiss was confirmed by the Senate and thus became Vermont’s first female U.S. District Court Judge.

Toys remain a source of trouble for children

We released VPIRG’s 24th annual *Trouble in Toyland* report just before Thanksgiving, highlighting potential hazards in children’s toys. For the first time ever, along with hard copy and web versions of the report, we offered a new interactive tool accessible via smart phone or computer at <http://www.toysafety.mobi>. As always, the information helps parents and other toy-buyers avoid some common hazards during the holiday shopping season and beyond.

The report found cause for continued vigilance in order to protect Vermont’s children:

- Despite a ban on small parts in toys for children under three, there are still toys available that pose serious choking hazards.
- Some toys tested exceeded 85 decibels sound level, which is the volume threshold established under American Society for Testing and Materials standards. Almost 15 percent of children aged 6 to 17 show signs of hearing loss.
- VPIRG found children’s products that exceeded the legal limits of phthalates, a toxic chemical used to soften plastic.
- Researchers found lead-laced toys on store shelves. One preschool book contained lead paint far above the new federal limits.

FACTS:

Between 1990 and 2008, at least 199 children died after choking or asphyxiating on a toy or toy part. In 2009, 5.3 million toys and other children’s products were pulled from store shelves due to choking hazards.

REPORTS RELEASED:

VPIRG’s 24th annual *Trouble in Toyland* report - November 2009

Bailout Report Card: What did Obama’s Team Learn? Second in Series — June 2009

Saving Dollars, Saving Democracy: Cost Savings for Local Election Officials through Voter Registration Modernization — May 2009

Failed Bailout: Lessons For Obama From Bush’s Failures On TARP — February 2009

FINANCIALS

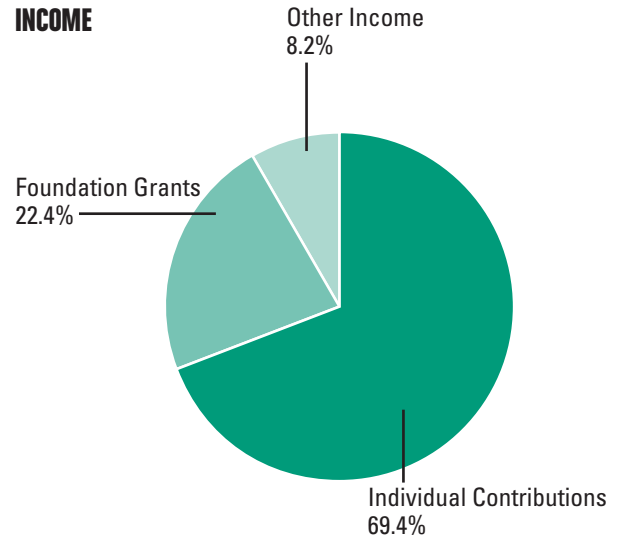
Strength in numbers

VPIRG's 37th year proved to be one of success, scope and spirit. Once again, despite continued economic volatility and uncertainty facing so many Vermonters, VPIRG members made a record level of investment in the work we do to serve and protect the public interest. Individuals made over 20,500 separate gifts to VPIRG. Our door canvass, which knocked on more than 60,000 doors, raised nearly \$250,000 and helped grow the organization by adding or renewing 3,700 members. And our sustaining members, those that make a gift to VPIRG every month to support our work all year long, rose to more than 1,200 this year. As a result, VPIRG raised a record \$1.1 million to support our campaigns and carry us in to 2010 poised to deliver even more valuable victories for Vermonters.

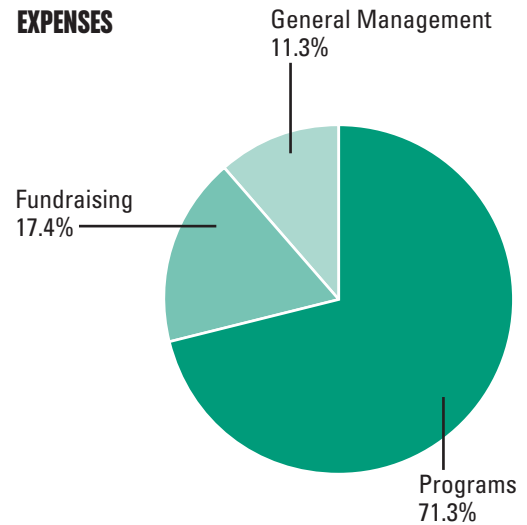
We remain proud that the majority of our funding comes from individual Vermonters. Roughly 80% of all the individual gifts we receive are donations of \$100 or less. We also benefited from a generous bequest from a long-time member who provided a legacy gift to help VPIRG protect the public interest for future generations of Vermonters. In 2009, individual donations from Vermonters accounted for nearly 70% of our income. In addition to our individual donors, 13 foundation grants contributed just over 22% of our income. The remaining 8% of revenue was generated from other sources such as special events, rental and interest income. The combined income of VPIRG and VPIREF, our 501(c) (3) education and research arm, totaled \$1,098,797 and expenses totaled \$1,059,347.

The generosity, support and inspiration provided by our thousands of members and supporters are truly what sustain VPIRG staff and volunteers throughout the year. We remain humbled by your generosity, honored by your trust in us to get the job done and committed to delivering the public interest victories that protect and preserve the health of Vermont's people, environment and locally-based economy.

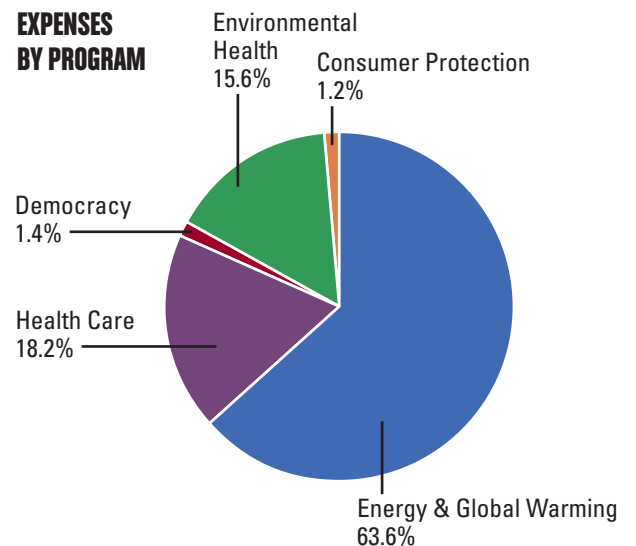
INCOME



EXPENSES



EXPENSES BY PROGRAM



Stalwart donors fuel our progress – THANK YOU!

At a time when everyone's financial security has been shaken, VPIRG's circle of support has held firm. The entire staff and board of trustees are grateful and inspired by this expression of trust. With more new members and a growing group of loyal monthly donors, the foundation of VPIRG's ability to be effective in our advocacy and grassroots organizing campaigns is both broader and deeper than ever before. We wish we could publicly acknowledge each and every supporter but the trees would complain. The generosity of those listed below deserves special recognition.*

FOUNDATION GRANTS:

Harris and Frances Block Foundation
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 State Environmental Leadership Program
 Toxics Action Center / Ben & Jerry's Foundation
 US Action
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 Charlie McDonough
 Duncan and Belle McDougall



VPIRG members, David and Margaret Luce, rally for the Public Option

Staff and activists give Bernie a Health Care send-off at Burlington Airport



VPIRG members, Elizabeth, Sam and Jessie Moore show support for VPIRG's Repower VT campaign

Denise McPeters
Patricia and Christopher McVeigh
Thomas Mercurio and Helen Head
David Merves
Eric Miller
Heather Miller
Ronald Miller
Joel and Hinda Miller
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Richard Watts and Alison Cleary
Bill Wereley
Jane Westervelt
Jeff and Dori Wolfe
Ramsey Yoder and Denise McGinley
Sandra Zelazo
John Zimmerman

HONORARY GIFTS:

Betty Jean Wallace gave her gift in honor of her late husband John A. Wallace
Gary Martin and Jessica Arendt gave their gift in honor of Gary Lee Allen

**A Humbling Bequest –
Airie Lindsey helps secure VPIRG's future**

In early 2009 VPIRG learned that a long-time member, whom we lost to cancer in late summer 2008, had provided for VPIRG in her will. Airie Lindsay, who generously supported VPIRG's work for more than three decades, avidly pursued a sustainable lifestyle on her hilltop farm in Barnet and often chided us for wasting paper by sending her thank you notes. She supported many organizations in her community and favored VPIRG with her support because of our focus on clean energy and combating climate change. Everyone connected to VPIRG benefits from Airie's special generosity and we are humbled and hopeful as we continue our work guided by the values she held dear.



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Natalia Fajardo
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Dusty Haselton
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Gretchen Kruesi
Field Associate



James Moore
Clean Energy Advocate



Andrea Stander
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Colleen Thomas
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Cassie Wills
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