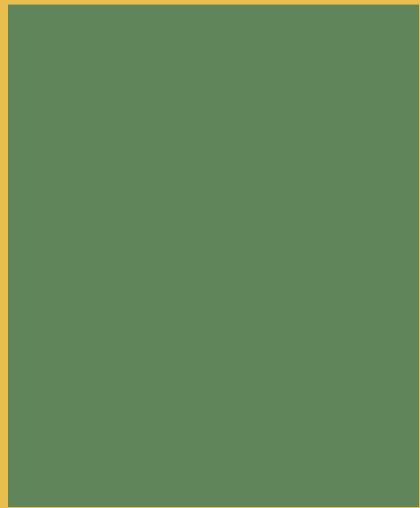




Annual Report 2010



FROM THE DIRECTOR



I celebrated my tenth year with VPIRG in late 2010, and it was the perfect cap on an extraordinary year.

Thanks to members like you, we had our most successful fundraising year ever — smashing our previous record set just one year earlier. One key element of that success was our door-to-door summer outreach program. Our dedicated canvassers knocked on over 50,000 doors from one end of the state to the other, promoting our clean energy agenda and ultimately setting an all-time record in membership support.

That kind of support allowed us to expand our staff and engage in campaign activities that would otherwise have been impossible. This in turn led to one of VPIRG's biggest victories ever — the state Senate's historic vote to retire the troubled Vermont Yankee nuclear plant when its license expires in 2012.

Of course, this victory was years in the making. Among the overflow crowd at the State House that critical day were college students who had spent their previous summer working 14 hour days to retire Vermont Yankee and longtime activists who had been looking forward to a vote like that for more than 30 years.

On that frosty February day, Vermont did something that no other state had done. Legislators listened to their constituents and used their good judgment to chart a new energy future for the state that doesn't include a dangerously unreliable nuclear plant.

I'm proud of the leadership role that VPIRG played in that campaign and in the work now under way to advance clear energy alternatives to Vermont Yankee and traditional fossil fuels. This includes the launch of our new VPIRG Energy project to make it easy and affordable for more Vermonters to get their energy from the sun.

But as you'll see in the pages that follow, our advocates and organizers didn't stop there. We ramped up our focus on health care reform lending much-needed advocacy support and grassroots muscle to the ambitious goals established by legislative leaders. We also led the charge on a number of important public health and consumer victories.

So, all that makes 2010 a tough act to follow. But rest assured, we're hard at work to make 2011 even better!

Thanks again for your support.

Paul Burns, Executive Director

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 38 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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Research Group

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Cover photos:

Top—Day of the Vermont Yankee
Senate vote

Middle—Launch of VPIRG Energy in
Williston with Duane Peterson,
Co-Director, Rep. Jim McCullough
and Jeanne Kirby, Revitalizing
Waterbury Executive Director

Bottom left—Paul Burns, VPIRG
Executive Director at an April 2010 Clean
Cars event with Lt. Gov. Brian Dubie and
Sen. Peter Shumlin

Bottom right—VPIRG Canvasser
Marty Schneider

“Retiring the old Vermont Yankee reactor is the right thing to do. The overwhelming vote in the Senate to chart a path without Vermont Yankee wouldn't have happened without VPIRG pushing all the way. VPIRG has been a leader in the effort to retire Vermont Yankee and we'll need their help to create a new clean energy economy that will ensure Vermont thrives for generations to come.”

— Governor Peter Shumlin



A historic Senate vote: 26-4 to retire Vermont Yankee

On February 24th the Vermont Senate voted 26-4 to retire as scheduled the aging Vermont Yankee nuclear reactor. The historic vote marked the first time a state legislature exercised its right to ensure a nuclear plant does not operate past its expiration date, and is easily one of our most important victories ever.

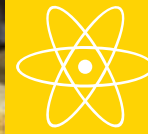
VPIRG has a long history of advocating for VY to be retired on schedule and we even had a hand in making sure this vote would happen. In 2006, we helped draft a bill to require legislative approval for any attempt to extend the plant's life beyond 2012. We believed then and we believe now that the legislature, the government body most representative of the people of Vermont, should have a say in what kind of energy future we leave for the next generation.

The monumental effort to deliver this vote was a culmination of years of tough advocacy countering Entergy Vermont Yankee's media machine and powerful lobbyists.

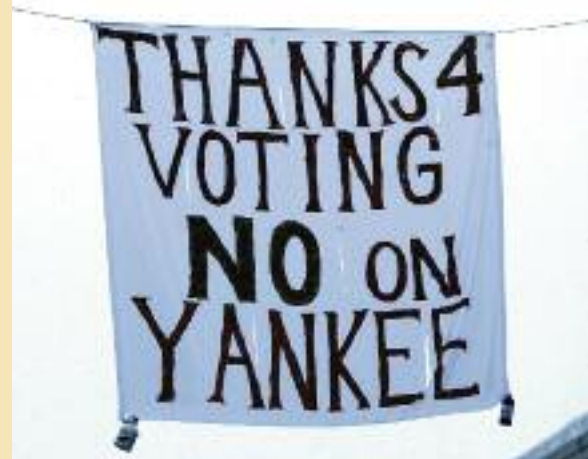
Also integral to this victory are our members and key coalition partners. They were always by our side and their dedication gave us the support we needed to win.

The vote drew national attention and widespread public support given the plant's troubled history of mishaps, failures and radioactive leaks. At the end of the day, many legislators lost all faith in Entergy when it was proven that on numerous occasions Entergy had failed to tell the truth to state legislators and regulators.

This is a historic victory that we hope may become a model for others to follow. Years of patient, experienced and passionate advocacy brought this vote in the Vermont Senate and we're now more determined than ever to see Vermont Yankee retired on schedule in 2012.



REPLACING
VERMONT YANKEE



The New York Times



Vermont State Senate Votes to Close Nuclear Plant



VPIRG Canvass Director
Leah Marsters and the canvass
team talk to the media

GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING

“Each day I go out to canvass, I’m constantly amazed at the amount of support there is from the southern corner of the state to the northern border, from the cities to the back woods — ordinary Vermonters are calling for our state to be the leader in clean energy.”

— Nick Atherton, VPIRG canvasser

By the people, for the people

Every year, there are hundreds of good ideas that are pondered, discussed or proposed in places like the Vermont State House that ultimately go nowhere. The difference between the good ideas that fall flat and those that actually move in the legislature often has to do with size and strength of the idea’s supporters. That’s where VPIRG’s grassroots organizing comes in.

Throughout 2010, on issue after issue, VPIRG’s field organizers made sure that legislators and other decision makers knew where their constituents stood. On the day of the historic 26-4 Senate vote to retire Vermont Yankee, our organizers worked with coalition partners from around the state to bring over 200 citizens to the State House during the worst snowstorm of the year. Over 400 Vermonters who couldn’t be at the State House called in to our organizers and joined the voices there in letting their legislators know exactly how they felt about Energy’s troubled nuclear plant.

And we don’t just make things happen on high-profile issues; on the day of the key vote to phase out the toxic chemical Bisphenol A (BPA) in children’s products, our organizers made sure Senators heard from their constituents, on the phone and over email. The result? While the chemical industry and their lobbyists tried to weaken the bill, the power of our grassroots organizing helped deliver victory in the state Senate with a major win that will keep kids better protected against chemical exposures.

FACTS:

- 126 Towns were visited by VPIRG’s summer outreach program
- 2673 Vermonters became NEW members of VPIRG during our summer outreach program
- 11,601 postcards were collected during the summer outreach program and delivered to the gubernatorial candidates urging them to take a strong stance on clean energy in their campaigns



VPIRG’s canvass team



**VPIRG
ENERGY**

Solar power made easy and affordable

For 38 years, one of VPIRG’s top priorities has always been creating a clean and safe energy future. Over the years our members have often told us they’re looking to do more on their own to reduce their carbon footprint.

In response, we launched VPIRG Energy to make it easy and affordable for people to get their electricity from the sun. Co-Directed by VPIRG President Duane Peterson and Clean Energy Program Director James Moore, the program does the leg work to recruit vendors, select equipment, bundle the federal and state government incentives, round up utility premiums and secure discounted financing.

With a manageable down payment and the benefit of grouped incentives and discounts available through the program, renewable solar energy will cost not much more than you’re paying your utility now. It’s the right thing to do for our planet and it’s good for the pocketbook.

The first two solar communities, launched in September, were Solar Waterbury and Solar Williston. VPIRG Energy helped increase the local solar capacity by more than 150% in just four months and we look forward to taking this success statewide.

As a result of the incredible response, VPIRG Energy plans to add solar communities throughout Vermont and is expanding its efforts to include solar hot water installations as well as solar electric systems. For more information on going solar, visit www.vpirgenergy.org.



Solar panels installed at a Solar Williston home

“With VPIRG’s new solar communities program Vermonters can ‘go solar’ for about what they’re paying now for electricity, plus about the cost of a good cup of coffee a week. And then after 10 years when you’ve paid off your solar panels, you’ll never have to pay for electricity again.”

— Duane Peterson, VPIRG Energy Co-Director

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Launched VPIRG Energy in the communities of Waterbury, Duxbury, Moretown, Williston and St. George.

FACTS:

There are just over 600 solar electricity installations in Vermont today; in the first two months of our solar communities program, over 500 Vermonters have asked us to help them go solar.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- VPIRG helped pass legislation to promote and increase renewable energy investments in Vermont. The law also:
 - Offers incentives to Vermont commercial clean energy developers and citizens who want to invest in their own clean energy solutions.
 - Improves permitting for renewable energy systems.
 - Provides current “cow power” producers access to a supportive state pricing program and also gives additional tax benefits for community-scale development of solar power generation.
- President Obama announced new federal standards for automobile fuel economy and global warming emissions. This program is based on the “clean cars program” already adopted by 13 states. VPIRG was instrumental in launching the program in Vermont in 2005.

“Vermont has effectively turned the page from the dirty, dangerous and expensive energy sources of the past toward a truly clean energy future.”

—Paul Burns, VPIRG Executive Director, February, 25, 2010

FACTS:

At today's prices, the federal automobile fuel economy and global warming standards will save Vermonters over \$110 million dollars by 2016.

REPORTS RELEASED:

State Leadership and the National Clean Cars Program — March 2010

Making our clean energy future a reality

VPIRG's flagship clean energy program had a banner year in 2010. We expanded our advocacy staff devoted to clean energy and more great work is already underway. With more staff and victories on Vermont Yankee and clean energy solutions a new energy economy is in our reach.

Led by Clean Energy Program Director James Moore, we pressed in passing legislation that provides incentives to commercial developers and citizens who want to invest in clean energy solutions for their home or business. The legislation will improve permitting and provide additional tax benefits to encourage clean energy investment.

In another win for Vermont's environment, the Obama administration followed Vermont's lead and announced new standards for automobile fuel economy and global warming emissions. An analysis done by VPIRG found that these new federal standards will save Vermonters 29 million gallons of gasoline by 2016.

Also at the federal level, on April 28th the Obama administration announced approval for the Cape Wind project off the coast of Massachusetts. VPIRG members helped generate comments in support of the proposal. The wind farm could meet as much as 75% of the electricity demand for Cape Cod and the islands and also build momentum for many more along the Atlantic seaboard.

Back at home, VPIRG joined with Vermont's three other leading environmental organizations to present a united voice supporting wind farms in Vermont. VPIRG members made their voices heard in record number by using our online action tool to show their support for wind as well.

Making clean energy a major issue in the gubernatorial campaign was the focus of VPIRG's summer outreach program in 2010. The program was a success and both Brian Dubie and Peter Shumlin held their kickoff events at clean energy businesses and five of the six leading gubernatorial candidates came into our outreach office in Burlington to present their clean energy plans to our canvass staff.



James Moore, VPIRG Clean Energy Program Director with the state's other leading environmental organizations at a press conference supporting wind farms



Health care reform victories

In 2010, VPIRG worked with decision makers, advocates, and coalition partners across the state to advance health care reform at the federal and state level. We worked closely with our congressional delegation to build the strongest possible federal reform legislation, while supporting state leaders in their efforts to kick start the campaign to bring affordable and universal coverage to Vermont.

In the State House, we supported the passage of Act 128, the law which brought together the resources, vision and timeline for Vermont's health care reform efforts. VPIRG Health Care Advocate Cassandra Gekas helped to shepherd the legislation through House and Senate negotiations in the final hours of the session, despite heavy opposition from insurers, drug companies and some hospitals.

The legislation called for the creation of three health care design options for Vermont. Although the proposal encourages creativity and vision, each reform option must put Vermont on the path for an affordable, high quality health care system that covers everyone and is financially sustainable for our state.

VPIRG will play an active role in this process as it moves forward to ensure that our new system is affordable, transparent, and fair for every



Cassandra Gekas, VPIRG Health Care Advocate at the State House

Vermont. This must include strong mechanisms for consumer protection, rigorous oversight, and a plan that serves and is accountable to the public interest.

“Vermont will once again lead the nation by making one of the most progressive health care systems in the country, even better.”

— Cassandra Gekas, VPIRG Health Care Advocate, May 12, 2010

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- VPIRG worked closely with our congressional delegation to ensure legislation was passed at the federal level. The Affordable Care Act, signed into law by President Obama in March, includes reforms that will:
 - Prohibit insurance companies from dropping your coverage if you get sick or have a pre-existing condition.
 - Allow children to stay on their parent's insurance policies through age 26.
 - Stop insurance companies from placing lifetime limits on the care you receive.
 - Require new plans to cover preventive services and immunizations.
- Helped pass legislation that put the Legislature on a path to consider fundamental reforms to Vermont's health care system in 2011. The bill:
 - Requires the design of three alternative systems, each of which would provide cost effective care for all Vermonters.
 - Improves the coordination of services for Vermonters with chronic health conditions by expanding the state's Blueprint for Health and Community Health Systems pilot program.
 - Institutes cost control measures to help keep hospital costs from rising so quickly.
 - Provides for greater transparency in the distribution of pharmaceutical samples to medical practices across the state.

FACTS:

By 2019, the ACA will reduce the rate of nonelderly uninsured in Vermont by 5.6% and will bring in over \$63 million in premium and cost-sharing subsidies to help Vermonters purchase reliable coverage.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Coordinated the campaign to pass extended producer responsibility legislation providing free and convenient locations around the state to recycle e-waste.
- Led the effort to pass one of the strongest laws in the world protecting consumers from the toxic chemical BPA used in some baby bottles, infant formula cans, and other reusable plastic containers.
- Testified and built grassroots support for additional legislation to better protect Vermont's waterways from polluting junkyards around the state.
- Revealed the presence of potentially harmful toxic chemicals in the bodies of six volunteers tested as part of a body burden study conducted with our allies in the Alliance for a Clean and Healthy Vermont.



VPIRG Environmental Health Advocate Charity Carbine-March speaks with the press on the release of *Toxic Exposures in the Green Mountain State* report

FACTS:

According to the body burden study conducted by the Alliance for a Clean and Healthy Vermont, Vermonters are likely no more protected from toxic exposures than any other population in the country. Almost all of the classes of chemicals we tested for were found in the bodies of the six participants, and each of the six had a minimum of 35 potentially harmful chemicals in their bodies.

Source: See below.

REPORTS RELEASED:

Toxic Exposures in the Green Mountain State — February 2010

Winning victories for public health and our environment

In the spring of 2005, VPIRG launched a campaign to create a convenient and effective recycling program for electronic waste (e-waste) in Vermont with our own, giant e-waste collection day on the State House lawn. Five years later, on April 19, 2010 that vision became a reality when Gov. Douglas signed into law a VPIRG-backed bill requiring electronics manufacturers to share in the costs and responsibility of recycling their discarded products.

This program goes into full effect on July 1, 2011 and will provide free and convenient e-waste recycling to residents, charities, schools, and small businesses in the state. Vermont became the 21st state to pass such a law and its implementation will mark a major victory for both consumers and the environment.

In addition to leading the charge on the e-waste recycling campaign, VPIRG's Environmental Health Advocate Charity Carbine-March worked with our coalition partners in the Alliance for a Clean and Healthy Vermont to protect Vermonters — especially children — from the toxic chemical Bisphenol A (BPA).

BPA has been linked to an array of harmful health effects including cancer, diabetes, and obesity, and is used in some baby bottles, sports bottles, infant formula cans and other containers. Despite the evidence of BPA risks, the federal government has failed to take action regulating this harmful toxin. Thankfully, the Vermont Legislature sided with children over the chemical industry and passed one of the strongest BPA laws in the world in 2010. This VPIRG-backed law phases out the use of BPA in reusable food and beverage containers as well as infant formula and baby food containers.

“Instead of storing old computers in their basements or waiting for once a year collection events, Vermonters will now be able to easily and responsibly recycle their e-waste for free.”

—Charity Carbine-March, VPIRG Environmental Health Advocate



VPIRG’s consumer protection and fair election campaigns

Controlling rising credit card fees

Legislation championed by Sen. John Campbell made Vermont the first state in the nation to stand up to the credit card giants in 2010. VPIRG supported passage of the law, which will help to protect Vermont citizens and small businesses from escalating and often indecipherable credit card fees. The law prohibits credit card companies from fining merchants for offering a discount to customers who use a credit card with lower fees for the merchant. It also allows merchants to set a minimum or maximum price for credit card purchases and to offer discounts for customers paying in cash.

Food safety in our schools

Believe it or not, an alarming number of kids are getting sick from food served in U.S. schools. On May 14, the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced tougher safety standards for ground beef served in school. The new standards will end a practice where schools were permitted to sell beef products through school lunch programs that would fail to meet the standards of fast food chains like McDonald’s.

While that’s a sensible start, VPIRG called for further actions to ensure our kids are getting safe, healthy food in school. We’re continuing to push for serving more local food and using a tougher, science-based safety standard for meat and poultry inspections.



Supreme Court: Corporations are people too

On January 21st the U.S. Supreme Court decided in *Citizens United vs. Federal Election Commission* that corporations have the same rights as human beings when it comes to spending money on independent ads to influence federal elections. This opened the flood gates to unprecedented corporate spending on attack ads during the November 2010 election. The Court’s decision has clearly expanded the role that the most powerful corporations can play in elections.

“This decision turns back the clock on over 60 years of precedent,” said VPIRG’s Executive Director, Paul Burns. “The ruling is a perversion of the law and a threat to our nation’s tradition of democracy,” he added.

While the decision did not have a direct impact on state elections in Vermont, even here voters were exposed to a barrage of negative ads funded by unknown donors in the 2010 gubernatorial race. The Court’s decision in *Citizens United* will continue to diminish the public’s voice in a system that already favors moneyed special interests, and will certainly lessen public trust in our officials. VPIRG will continue to work closely with our federal delegation and state legislators to require greater disclosure in campaign advertising and to place reasonable limits on campaign contributions.

“A corporation is not a person.”

—Paul Burns, VPIRG Executive Director on the Supreme Court’s *Citizens United* decision

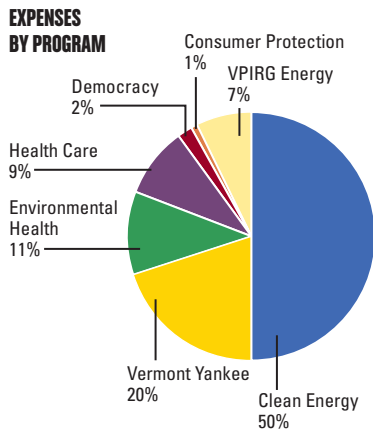
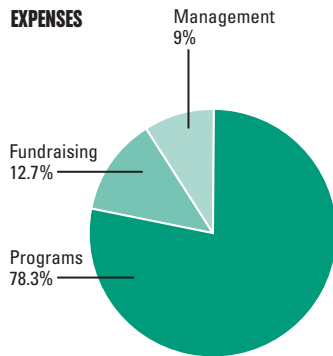
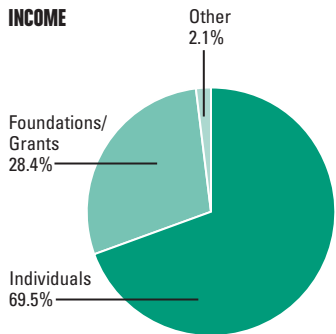
REPORTS RELEASED:

Trouble in Toyland — 25th Annual Survey of Toy Safety — November 2010

The source of our strength is YOU

While the successes shared in this report show that VPIRG continues to effectively protect the public interest, it's the generosity of our members that empower us to deliver these results. We're grateful for the support of VPIRG members who again made a record level of investment in our work.

Individual Vermonters continue to provide the majority of our funding, which accounted for 22,280 separate gifts in 2010. The combined income of VPIRG and VPIREF, our 501 (c) 3 education and research arm totaled \$1,563,257 and expenses totaled \$1,458,701.



Loyal VPIRG members and supporters: THANK YOU!

The entire staff and board of trustees are thankful for the commitment and support from VPIRG members. Member support makes us effective in our advocacy and grassroots organizing and ultimately allows us to deliver victories. We're honored by this commitment to reaching our shared goals. While we wish we could thank every donor here, the generosity of those listed below deserves special recognition.*

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John "No Nukes" and
Jenny Warshow
Bill Wereley
Nora Wright
Becky Wszolek
Sandra Zelazo



VPIRG's canvassers, Marty Schnieder and Katie Kristensen at the Burlington canvass office

A special bequest from Margaret George

In December we learned that the late Margaret George provided for VPIRG in her will. Margot's special support will make a difference across all of our programs and everyone at VPIRG appreciates her generosity and commitment.

For more information on making a bequest to VPIRG contact Dave Donegan, Development Manager at 223-8421.



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