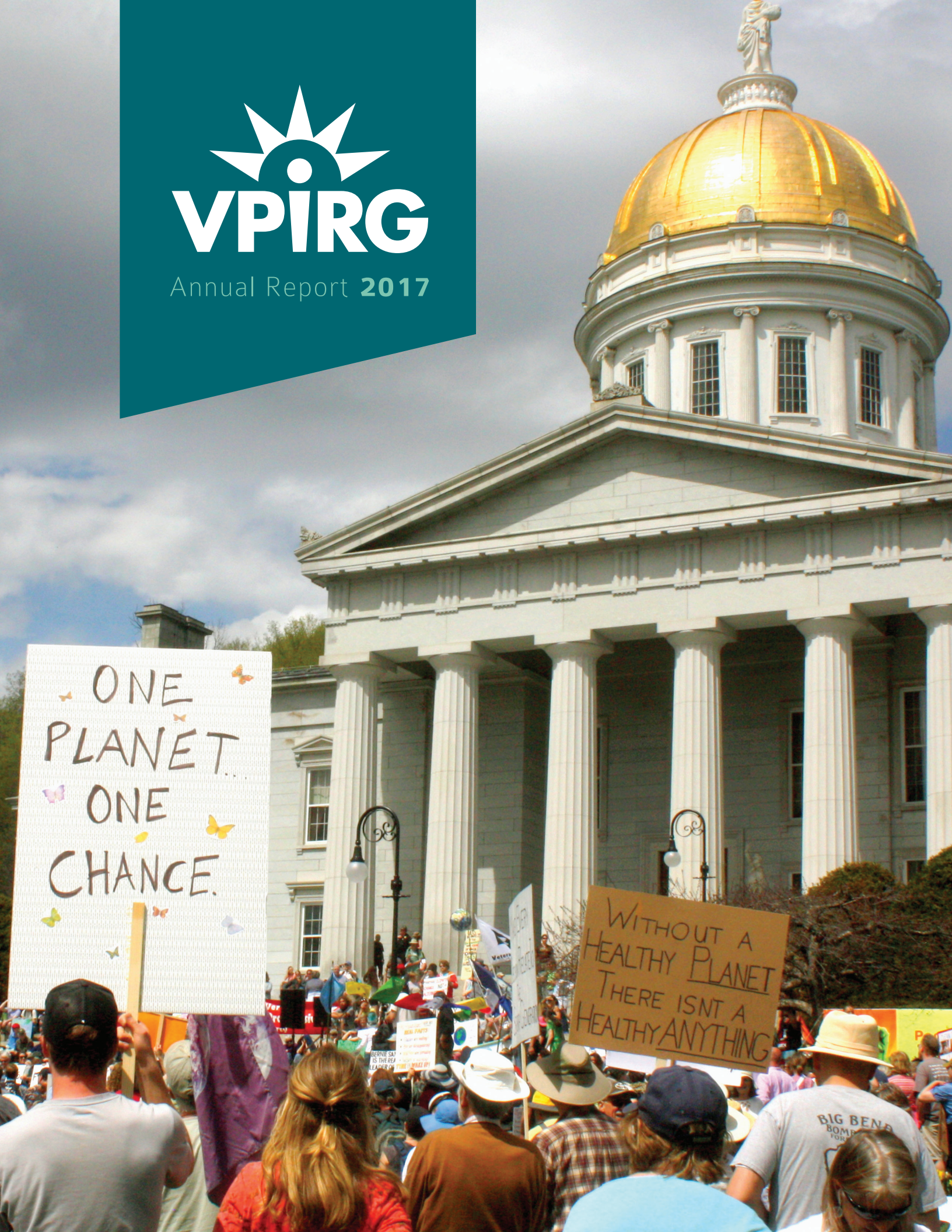




Annual Report **2017**





## Letter from the Director



“Vermont Fights Back” was essentially our motto for 2017. The year began with the largest public rally in recent Vermont history (the Women’s March) on the steps of the State House, one day after the presidential inauguration.

Ten months later, VPIRG co-hosted the Crossroads Conference in Burlington – a gathering of hundreds of Vermonters committed to charting a path to progress on issues as diverse as clean water, family leave, climate change and racial justice.

In between, we ran the largest summer canvass campaign in VPIRG’s history. We had more than 100 canvassers knocking

on doors throughout the state. They visited every community and recruited members in every legislative district.

Our canvassers had tens of thousands of conversations, and in each one they talked about how our shared values were under attack by the Trump administration and Congress. More importantly, they made clear that VPIRG was fighting back.

One canvasser told me that she couldn’t imagine doing anything more important during the summer of 2017. And I think that was a common feeling among her peers.

I know that as protections against climate change, toxic pollution

and corporate greed are being rolled back in Washington, I’m grateful for the opportunity to press for state-based progress right here. No, this work isn’t the complete answer to the mess in DC, but it can provide a model for the future that also benefits Vermonters right away.

We didn’t go looking for this fight, but thanks for helping us be part of it.

Paul Burns

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Burns". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping "P" and "B".

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◀ In 2017, “Vermont Fights Back” became VPIRG’s animating theme. Our staff, allies and 50,000+ members and supporters put everything we had into fighting back against the outrageous attacks on our people and environment coming from D.C. and demonstrating that a different way is possible.

## 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 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 45 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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# 2017 A YEAR OF FIGHTING BACK

On January 21, 2017, more than 15,000 people gathered on the State House lawn for the Vermont Women's March to emphatically demonstrate their opposition to the promised attacks on our people and environment from the newly inaugurated administration in Washington, D.C.

The Vermont march was truly something to behold. It wasn't the largest individual march that day by sheer numbers, but it almost certainly had to be the largest

on a per-capita basis. The march attendance itself was twice as large as its host city's population.

VPIRG did not organize that march but many of our staff and a great many of our members did attend that historic event and we all looked on in amazement at the energy and passion on display. That day we became certain of something we had already expected:

**VERMONTERS WOULD NOT BE BACKING DOWN WITH OUR RIGHTS, HEALTH, ENVIRONMENT AND FUTURE ON THE LINE.**

It was clear that while corporate lobbyists, Wall Street executives and climate deniers were gaining power in Washington, D.C., they were not in charge here.

Vermonters were ready to fight back. And in 2017, that became

VPIRG's animating theme. Our staff, allies and 50,000+ members and supporters put everything we had into fighting back against the outrageous attacks on our people and environment coming from D.C. and demonstrating that a different way is possible.

**IT WAS NOT JUST A MOMENT – IT WAS A MOVEMENT.**

VPIRG has been working to protect and promote the health and wellbeing of Vermont's people, environment and locally based economy for more than 45 years. But 2017 brought with it a new sense of urgency and had our organization grappling with what it means to be a public interest organization in an era of unprecedented threats coming from our nation's capital - egregious ethical conflicts, massive cuts to social and environmental programs, rollbacks of fundamental climate and consumer protections, undermining of our democratic processes, and so much more.

That's why VPIRG launched the

"Vermont Fights Back" campaign focused on the need for state-level leadership and action at a time when the attacks coming from the Trump Administration and Congress are seemingly endless. We believe that Vermont can stand up and hold the line against all the backsliding we're seeing at the federal level. Better yet, we know that Vermont can be a beacon in these dark and difficult times by building real solutions to combat the attacks on our people and environment and instead chart a positive course for our state.

The good news is that the Women's March was only a preview of Vermonters' tenacity and fight-back spirit. January 21st, 2017, was not just a moment – it was a movement.

◀ On January 21, 2017 more than 15,000 Vermonters gathered on the State House lawn for the Vermont Women's March. Many VPIRG staff attended that day (that's our Associate Director Liz Edsell!) and the takeaway was clear: Vermonters were ready to fight back to protect our people and environment from the outrageous attacks coming from Washington, D.C.



## Building the Fight-Back Movement One Door at a Time

The 2017 VPIRG Summer Canvass took the Vermont Fights Back message to tens of thousands of doorsteps across the state, organizing Vermonters around the idea that we can't take these outrageous attacks on our people, planet and values coming from D.C. – we must stand up and fight back with purpose.

The result? The most successful summer canvass in our 45+ year history. In talking to Vermonters in every Vermont town, our canvass team discovered that people all over the state are ready and willing to tackle these challenges

## Fight Back Forums

Following the wake of Fight Back momentum and grassroots energy generated by the summer canvass, VPIRG field organizers and advocates organized Fight Back Forums in more than a dozen communities across the state in 2017.

At each of these forums, VPIRG staff and community members came together on a summertime weekday night – usually in a town library over some snacks – to

head on, regardless of who is in the White House, Capitol Hill, or Vermont's own State House.

Over the course of four months, our team of 100+ canvassers spoke with Vermonters in every single town in Vermont – 40,000+ conversations in total. And in town after town, we found all kinds of Vermonters ready to demand

investigate what fighting back means to Vermonters: dive deeper into the key policies that will move our state forward; and equip VPIRG members with important civic skills to effect change, with trainings on how to effectively lobby legislators, organize in communities and use social media as a tool for democracy.

"Vermonters may not have much control over what's going on in Washington, D.C., but we can

that our state leaders pursue bold policies to move our state forward.

Some of the successes of the summer canvass simply cannot be quantified: the organizing, campaigning, and leadership skills that our canvassers honed over the summer; the energy of nearly one hundred dedicated and enthusiastic staffers all under one roof before

influence Vermont to make it a place that reflects our values," said Christina Fornaciari, VPIRG's lead organizer for the Fight Back Forum series. "It's so easy to wallow in all the bad news, but we can't be paralyzed. We have the opportunity to seize this difficult political moment and use it as a catalyst for bold state-level action and social change.

This is how we can fight back right here in Vermont."

heading out to turf; the optimism of what the future will hold when huddled around a campfire with friends; the thrill of biking up a huge hill, then soaring down it; the fulfillment in building community and making an impact in Vermont – and the world.



## Vermont Crossroads Conference

Before November 2017, it may have seemed unusual to see VPIRG team up to host a conference with groups as varied as the ACLU, Planned Parenthood of Northern New England, the Vermont-NEA, Rights & Democracy, Main Street Alliance, Toxics Action Center, Justice

for All and the Vermont Natural Resources Council.

But these are not ordinary times, and we know that VPIRG and our members can't Fight Back alone. It's more important now than ever that those working for positive, progressive change come together

around common goals and push for a more just future.

That's why on the eleventh of November, VPIRG and the aforementioned groups co-hosted the day-long Vermont Crossroads Conference at Champlain College. The goal of the conference was to

## VPIRG'S MOST SUCCESSFUL CANVASS BY THE NUMBERS

SUMMER STAFF  
**100+**

DOORS KNOCKED  
**114,148**

CONVERSATIONS HELD  
**42,695**

FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS  
OF VFB CAMPAIGN  
**19,662**

CAMPING TRIPS  
**37**

PHOTO PETITIONS  
**1,571**

PETITIONS  
**24,982**

NEW MEMBERS  
**4,800+**

TOTAL VPIRG SUPPORTERS  
**50,000+**

▲ In 2017 our canvass went door-to-door for the Vermont Fights Back campaign – the result was the most successful canvass in VPIRG history. Thousands of Vermonters (like those pictured) signed on urging Vermont officials to fight back with bold policies that move our state forward on important issues like climate change, safe drinking water and an open and transparent government.



bring together a diverse array of groups that are fighting to better the quality of life for Vermonters – and to jumpstart collaboration among those groups, their members and supporters.

And that’s just what happened.

Hundreds of Vermonters gathered for keynote speakers, including Senator Bernie Sanders and Reverend Joan Javier-Duval of the UU Church in Montpelier, as well as workshops, breakout sessions and plenary panels to learn about some of the top

values-based campaigns moving forward in Vermont - from climate solutions to family leave, and from racial justice reform to clean water. Attendees were encouraged to challenge themselves and broaden their understanding and engagement by exploring less -

familiar issues throughout the day in an attempt to identify points of intersection and opportunities for synchronicity between the many campaigns promoting a positive vision for Vermont.

## Lighting a Spark

The combined efforts of VPIRG’s 2017 Fight Back campaign did indeed make a huge difference. Not only were VPIRG and our allies successful in advancing a number of key policies and initiatives throughout 2017 (see below), we made sure our state

leaders returned to Montpelier in 2018 with a renewed purpose and a clear message: This is not the time to “wait and see.” Vermonters want bold action and they want it now. That resulted in a 2018 legislative session that actually saw serious progress on a

wide range of issues (visit [vpig.org](http://vpig.org) to learn more about our 2018 achievements). Our efforts in 2017 lit the spark that ignited that progress.

But the fight is far from over. The attacks on our people and environment continue, and there’s

still so much more we can do to advance the public interest in our state. The good news is the passion that was on display on the State House lawn in January 2017 is just as strong today. Vermonters are still fighting back.

## FIGHT BACK BRIGHT SPOTS

### Holding the line on appliance efficiency standards:

VPIRG fought hard for the passage of H.411, a bill that safeguards appliance efficiency standards in Vermont even if the Trump administration repeals or eliminates those federal standards. This important backstop requires a minimum level of energy efficiency for more than 55 types of appliances – saving energy and saving Vermonters money.

### Suing the Trump EPA over new toxics rules:

In June 2017, the Trump EPA issued new rules in accordance with the 2016 update to the 45+ year-old landmark Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA). The Trump EPA’s proposed rules essentially hand over chemical safety protections to giant chemical companies and special interests. VPIRG joined national allies in litigation, challenging these new rules as grossly insufficient in protecting American workers and consumers from toxic chemicals.

### Expanding access to contraceptives:

In stark contrast to the many other states that are trying to make access to birth control harder, VPIRG helped pass a bill (H.620) in 2016 that would codify and expand the birth control benefits found in the Affordable Care Act. In 2017, we saw the importance of putting these state-level protections in place as Congress and the Trump administration moved to rollback aspects of the Affordable Care Act. Thanks to this legislation, Vermonters will have access to no-cost birth control, and this legislation even expands these benefits to include vasectomies.

### Stopping Michael Dourson from heading the EPA’s Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention:

VPIRG joined over 100 other groups in opposing Trump’s appointment of Michael Dourson to the EPA. Dourson has a long history of serving the interests of the tobacco, fossil fuel and chemical industries, and bolstering pseudoscience in order to put the interests of big corporations over public health. Thanks in part to coordinated public pressure, Michael Dourson ultimately withdrew his nomination for this EPA post.





As Governor Phil Scott joined other elected leaders, organizations and businesses last June to announce the formation of the Vermont Climate Pledge Coalition – a group dedicated to upholding the Paris Climate Agreement in Vermont – VPIRG was there to greet those leaders and urge them to #WalkTheWalk when it comes to climate action.

## Actions Before Words: Holding the Scott Administration Accountable on Climate

June 1, 2017.

That day President Donald Trump stood in the Rose Garden beneath blue skies and beaming sunlight to announce his intention to withdraw the U.S. from the Paris Climate Accords.

The announcement was a devastating – albeit unsurprising – confirmation of what many had suspected since Trump’s election: that his administration would, of course, not lead in addressing global warming but actually oppose and actively derail U.S. efforts to tackle climate change.

That June day it became clear that if the U.S. were to move forward with any kind of bold climate action, it would need to happen at the state level – and it would need to happen in states like Vermont.

### #WALKTHEWALK

We at VPIRG had already been making the case for state climate action for some time. Even prior to President Trump’s election, the federal government had been slow to pursue and adopt the bold, transformative policies necessary to rapidly move our country away from dirty, polluting fossil fuels

toward clean, renewable energy.

President Obama’s Clean Power Plan (which the Trump administration is trying to undo) represented a positive step in the right direction, as did the signing of the Paris Accords. But with the fossil fuel industry exerting so much influence over Congress, U.S. climate leadership has been lacking for some time. The inauguration of Donald Trump – a man who rejects climate science completely – was, however, a death knell for federal climate action.



Unfortunately, we at VPIRG understood that here in Vermont we had a climate leadership issue of our own. Despite years of genuine progress in the areas of efficiency and clean electricity – Vermont is nowhere close to meeting our own statutory greenhouse gas reduction goals. In fact, Vermont carbon emissions are actually 16% higher than they were in 1990.

Meanwhile, Vermont's own governor, Phil Scott, had himself not even acknowledged the scientific consensus on climate change until 2016 – when he finally “evolved” on the issue.

Since that evolution, the governor has frequently said the right things about the need to address climate change, but his actions have moved Vermont almost entirely in the wrong direction.

That's why, in June 2017, VPIRG welcomed the governor's announcement that he would work to uphold the Paris Agreement and Vermont's own more ambitious climate goals. However, we did so cautiously and skeptically, knowing the governor's record belied that commitment.

With that in mind, VPIRG launched our Walk the Walk campaign – aimed at pushing the governor to live up to his promise to enact bold climate action and to hold him accountable if (and ultimately when) he failed to do so.

## IMPOSSIBLE TO IGNORE

As part of that campaign VPIRG organizers collected hundreds of signatures on a petition urging the governor to ‘Walk the Walk’ on climate action and we publicized that petition and its backers in paid ads and in social media.

We also brought dozens of our VPIRG summer canvassers out to a climate event at which the governor spoke in June. Again, as the governor talked the talk about the importance of addressing climate change, our organizers drew the interest of media and the public by calling on him to take a number of specific steps to reduce Vermont's contribution to global warming *now*.

Reporting on the event, VPR wrote,

**“[VPIRG’S] PRESENCE WAS A REMINDER THAT DESPITE SCOTT’S CLEAR DISAGREEMENT WITH THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION ON CLIMATE POLICY, SCOTT’S RHETORIC ON THE ISSUE DOESN’T LINE UP WITH HIS POLICY POSITIONS.”**

For weeks we pressed the administration to pursue clear steps that would help Vermont cut pollution, strengthen our economy and boost the most vulnerable. The governor did eventually commit to one of those steps, establishing a climate action commission tasked with coming up with recommendations he and the legislature could pursue in the coming session.

## SPEAKING OUT FOR CLIMATE ACTION

Unfortunately, the governor's climate action commission got off to an inauspicious start. The 21-member coalition was stacked with industry representatives, Scott campaign donors and



administration officials. Perhaps worse, the governor named as co-chair of the climate commission's Technical Advisory Group a person who has promoted climate skepticism and is one of the state's leading opponents of clean-energy development.

VPIRG worked to highlight these missteps and pressed forward to make sure that the commission heard from the vast majority of Vermonters who want meaningful climate action. And we succeeded.

All across the state people came out and pushed the commission to recommend serious steps commensurate with the crisis we face. In fact, the number one public recommendation by far was that the state put a price on the polluting fossil fuels imported into Vermont and give the money back to Vermonters instead – a policy VPIRG has been advocating for as part of the Energy Independent Vermont coalition since 2014.

Nearly 500 Vermonters commented in favor of carbon pollution pricing online and in-person – the number one recommendation by far.

But, after just two of the scheduled

four commission meetings, Gov. Scott announced via social media that regardless of what the public wanted, he would remain unwilling even to consider a price on carbon pollution.

Despite this – VPIRG, our members and allies were successful in getting the governor's own handpicked climate action commission to recommend he at least study carbon pollution pricing to understand the economic benefits. The governor rejected that recommendation, but fortunately the legislature moved forward to commission such a study in 2018.

## THE WORK CONTINUES

Getting the climate action commission to recommend a carbon pricing study was a modest but critical victory in the fight for bold, transformational climate action – a fight that is made more difficult by a governor who seems averse to real climate solutions.

Nevertheless, VPIRG and our allies will continue to try to move the needle where we can – as we did in 2017 when we helped pass a law to hold the line on





## A CLOSER LOOK: GOV. SCOTT'S RECORD ON CLIMATE

In 2017 VPIRG launched its 'Walk the Walk Campaign' to call attention to the contradictions between the governor's words and actions on climate change. Since taking office, Governor Scott has:

- Proposed **slashing Efficiency Vermont's budget**
- Proposed **draining the Clean Energy Development Fund**
- Oversaw largest ever **decline in Vermont's solar industry**
- Put forth a plan for **Volkswagen settlement funds** that would allow 70% to be used to subsidize diesel vehicles
- **Scrubbed mentions of climate change** from Act 250 report
- Declared that **climate refugees are an "economic boon"** for Vermont
- Pushed **\$4 million loophole** for businesses to opt out of Efficiency Vermont
- Contrary to "no new taxes and fees," signed **new fee on solar farms**, supports **tax on EV charging**
- Pushed for restrictive sound rules to **ban wind power**
- Blatantly **disregarded public comments** made to his own Climate Action Commission

appliance efficiency standards and successfully beat back the governor's attempts to cut funding for Efficiency Vermont.

Meanwhile, we will continue to highlight the governor's record on climate (see above). It would of course be our hope that the governor reverses course and embraces serious climate action. If and when he does that – we'll stand with him. But until then, VPIRG will continue to play the role of watchdog and make sure the public understands the truth. Because when it comes to perhaps the greatest challenge our planet faces, words aren't enough – we need action.









# AN ADEQUATE RESPONSE:

## Pushing for Stronger Toxic Chemical Reforms after PFOA Discovery

Protecting Vermonters from toxic chemicals has been a key priority of VPIRG for most of our organization's history. But that work took on a renewed urgency in 2017, as VPIRG and our members joined with allies to push comprehensive toxic chemical reform in response to the discovery of perfluorinated chemicals (PFOA) in Bennington County (and elsewhere) the year before.

That reform – which took the form of Senate Bill 103 (S.103) – not only sought to address the issues associated with PFOA in our drinking water, but other potential chemical threats as well – particularly in children's products. VPIRG and our allies were successful in getting this legislation close to the finish line in 2017. (We also got it over the finish line in 2018, only to see the bill vetoed by Governor Phil Scott – read more about the latest development on our website: [www.vpirg.org](http://www.vpirg.org))

We sat down with VPIRG's Executive Director to learn more about this effort, where we stand in the fight to protect Vermonters and what comes next:

### Q: HOW DID S.103 COME TO BE?

VPIRG members played an

important role in helping to pass legislation in 2014 (Act 188) intended to protect kids from toxic chemicals in toys and other products made for children.

But a concession that legislators made to industry lobbyists just before the law was passed made it much more difficult than necessary for Vermont's Health Commissioner to actually keep kids safe.

We and our allies have been working since then to close loopholes and cut red tape in the law. We came close to fixing the law in 2015, but then - Lt. Gov. Phil Scott broke a tie vote in the Senate in favor of industry rather than giving kids greater protections.

Finally, after the discovery of PFOA water contamination in Bennington County and elsewhere, we overcame industry opposition and convinced a broad majority of legislators to support greater protections against toxins in children's products.

### Q: WHAT ROLE DID VPIRG PLAY IN PUSHING THIS LEGISLATION?

VPIRG advocates worked every day during the legislative session to pass these reforms. We provided detailed testimony, coordinated

with allies, recruited other experts to testify and gathered comments and support from hundreds of VPIRG members. We also connected our members with their legislators at key moments during the session.

### Q: SO THIS IS ABOUT PROTECTING KIDS - WHY WOULD ANYONE OPPOSE IT?

Chemical manufacturers flew lobbyists in to try to block this legislation because they didn't want any state to pass a law that might hurt their business. They make the chemicals that go into these products, so their interest is clear.

The trade association for toy manufacturers also opposed the bill (as did some large corporate toy makers).

THEY CLAIMED THAT THE TOXIC CHEMICALS POSED NO THREAT TO KIDS. HOWEVER, MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS DISAGREED WITH THEM

Associated Industries of Vermont opposed the legislation mostly because they don't want the government regulating the activities of business, even when it involves dangerous chemicals

in toys.

### Q: SO WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME?

Working closely with our allies at Vermont Conservation Voters, Vermont Natural Resources Council and Seventh Generation, we convinced both the House and Senate to pass versions of S.103 in 2017. But the versions differed, and the two chambers had to come back in 2018 to finish their work on the bill.

### Q: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

The excellent legislation passed by the House and Senate in 2018 was later vetoed by Gov. Phil Scott. So our work to protect Vermont's children from toxic threats continues. We will not stop.

# Economic Fairness is in the Public Interest

By some measures, economic inequality in the United States is worse today than it's ever been.

At VPIRG we see this as a public interest issue.

As large special interests have used their enormous wealth to influence the political process, our economic policies have disproportionately put corporate bottom lines over the health and well-being of our people.

While much of the industrialized world provides access to health care, education, housing, childcare and other crucial family-centered benefits, the U.S. has fallen way behind – and it's only likely to get worse at the federal level.

And Vermont is no different – despite a handful of progressive policies, our lower- and middle-income families continue to fall behind. It has become increasingly clear that there's much more that can and should be done for those among us living one paycheck away from financial insecurity.

Recognizing this, VPIRG and our members sought to engage more directly on issues surrounding equity and prosperity for all Vermonters. Leveling the playing field by protecting and investing in workers and families is in the public interest. That's why in 2017, VPIRG pushed for two critical policies to do that: paid family and medical leave, and retirement security:



## Paid Family and Medical Leave

We all know that balancing life and work can be hard – and after a birth, serious injury, or long-term illness, that balance can be near impossible. This is especially true when workers and their families are forced to make the impossible choice between a paycheck and staying home to care for themselves or a loved one.

Most countries around the globe guarantee paid family and medical leave for their citizens, but it doesn't seem like the U.S. is going to take this step at the federal level anytime soon. We know that enacting paid family and medical leave in Vermont presents the opportunity to benefit working Vermonters, young families and small businesses.

That's why in 2017 VPIRG joined VTFaMLI, a statewide coalition of over 20 organizations fighting for a paid family and medical leave insurance program in Vermont. Together with the coalition, VPIRG advocated for H.196, paid family and medical leave legislation that would ensure 12 weeks of paid leave for employees. H.196 passed the House at the end of the 2017 legislative session.

(It's worth noting that in the 2018 legislative session, H.196 passed both the House and Senate chambers, but was ultimately vetoed by Governor Phil Scott. Visit [www.vpirg.org](http://www.vpirg.org) to learn more.)



## Retirement Security

Less than half of Vermont workers participate in an employer-sponsored retirement plan – the lowest percentage in New England. The majority of the state's small businesses can't afford to provide their employees with retirement plans; at the same time, research shows that 80 percent of workers would participate in a plan if it was available for them through an employer. The result has been that most Vermonters have saved very little for retirement, causing strain for retirees, the economy, and the state.

That's why VPIRG believes it's time for Vermont to establish a public retirement program.

We successfully advocated for the

passage of S.135, legislation that establishes the Green Mountain Secure Retirement Plan - a voluntary, state-run retirement program for businesses with 50 employees or fewer. Under this plan, small businesses that otherwise do not have the financial or administrative resources to offer retirement plans can now provide these benefits to their employees, which means an estimated 100,000 Vermonters will gain access to a retirement plan under the Green Mountain Secure Retirement Plan.





# Our 2017 Accomplishments

**Vermont Holds the Line On Appliance Efficiency Standards:** In the face of attacks on energy efficiency from Congress and the White House, VPIRG successfully fought for appliance efficiency standards at the state level that will remain in place regardless of what the federal government does.

This new law will provide cost-saving protections for consumers, requiring a minimum level of energy efficiency for over 55 different types of appliances, from refrigerators to heaters.

**Vermont Becomes 1st State to Require Statewide Official Tax Disclosure:** In 2017, Vermont became the first state to require tax transparency from statewide candidates. The same legislation (S.8), also created a modest state ethics commission, prohibited certain “pay-to-play” activities, and put limits on the “revolving door” problem where state officials turn into lobbyists immediately after leaving office. Though VPIRG supported the bill, we had advocated for much stronger provisions.

**VPIRG Joins Lawsuit Against Trump EPA:** VPIRG is challenging two new rules recently proposed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to implement the 2016 Lautenberg Chemical Safety Act. We believe the industry-friendly rules fail to adequately protect public health.

The petition was filed jointly by our partners at Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families and Earthjustice. VPIRG and the Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization joined in the litigation. Additional lawsuits were filed by other public health and environmental groups in jurisdictions around the country.

**VPIRG Helps Pass Retirement Security Law:** We face a growing problem in this country where many seniors simply cannot afford to retire. That’s why VPIRG helped to pass a law making Vermont the first state to move forward with a voluntary, state-run retirement program.

The Obama administration authorized states to implement retirement plans, and Vermont’s program will be available to employers with 50 or fewer employees. It will allow many small employers to provide retirement plans for the first time. Research shows that workers are significantly more likely to enroll in a plan if provided by their employer, and Vermont’s plan presents an accessible, cost-effective way to boost retirement savings in the state.

**VPIRG Runs the Most Successful Canvass in Our History:** The 2017 Summer Canvass campaign, called “Vermont Fights Back,” focused on the threats coming daily from the Trump administration and Congress, including breathtaking ethical conflicts, massive cuts to healthcare, education, and environmental programs, climate denialism, rollbacks of fundamental consumer protections and more.

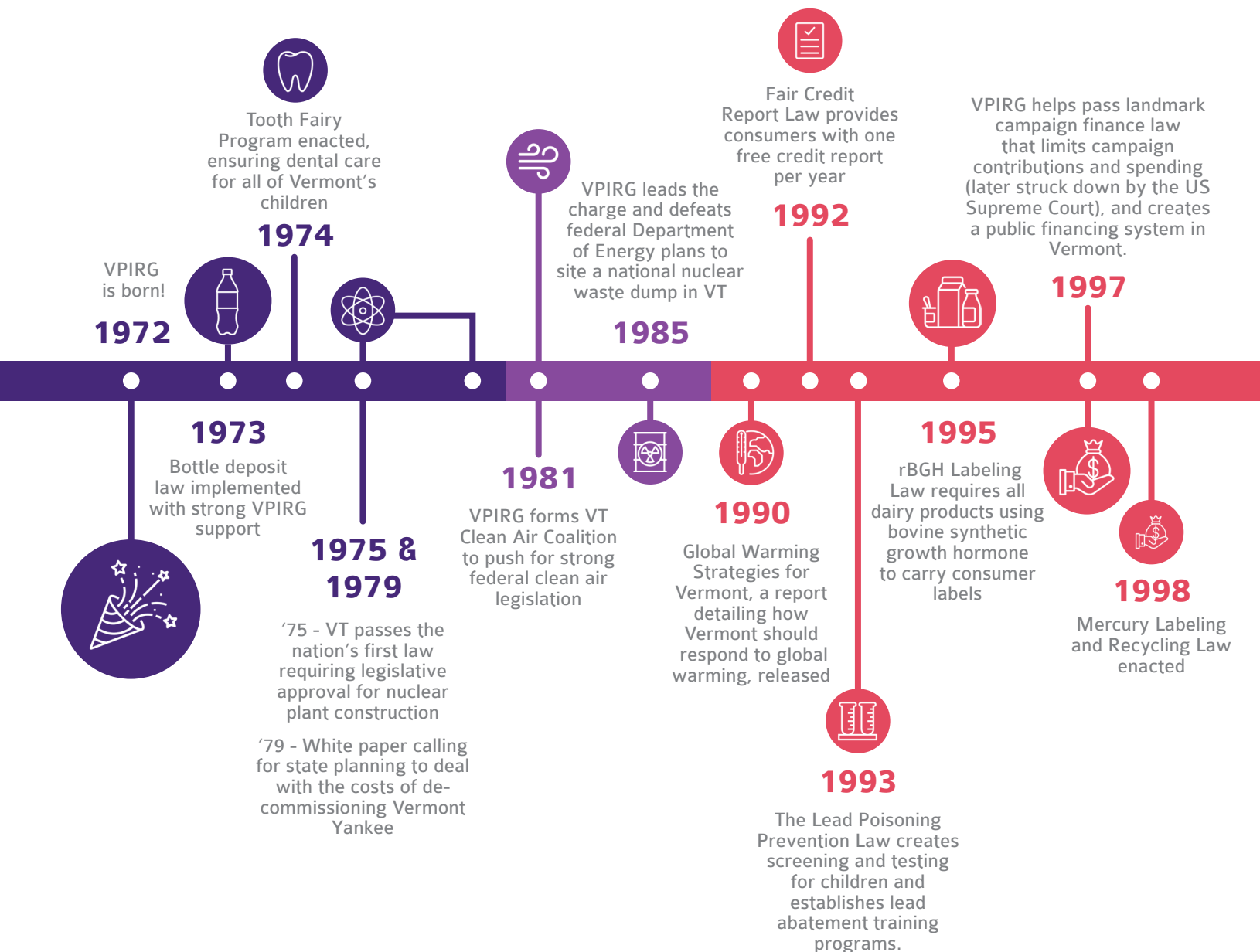
Throughout the summer, our team knocked on more than 100,000 doors – in every single town in Vermont. They had nearly 50,000 conversations with Vermonters—nearly 15,000 of whom contributed to VPIRG’s work. Most importantly, almost 5,000 Vermonters stepped up as new members of VPIRG, bringing our total supporter-base to more than 50,000.

**Carbon Pollution Pricing Is #1 Recommendation to Governor’s Climate Action Commission:** VPIRG joined our allies in the Energy Independent Vermont campaign to organize more than 500 Vermonters from all walks of life and every corner of the state to speak out in their own words for bold climate action during hearings held by the governor’s climate action commission. The number one public recommendation to the commission, by far, was to put a price on the polluting fossil fuels imported into Vermont and give the money back to Vermonters instead.

Unfortunately, after just two of the four scheduled commission meetings, Gov. Scott announced that regardless of what the public wanted, he would remain unwilling even to consider a price on carbon pollution. Nevertheless, his hand-picked climate commission recommended he at least study the idea. He rejected that too – but fortunately the Vermont legislature passed such a study in 2018.

# VPIRG 45

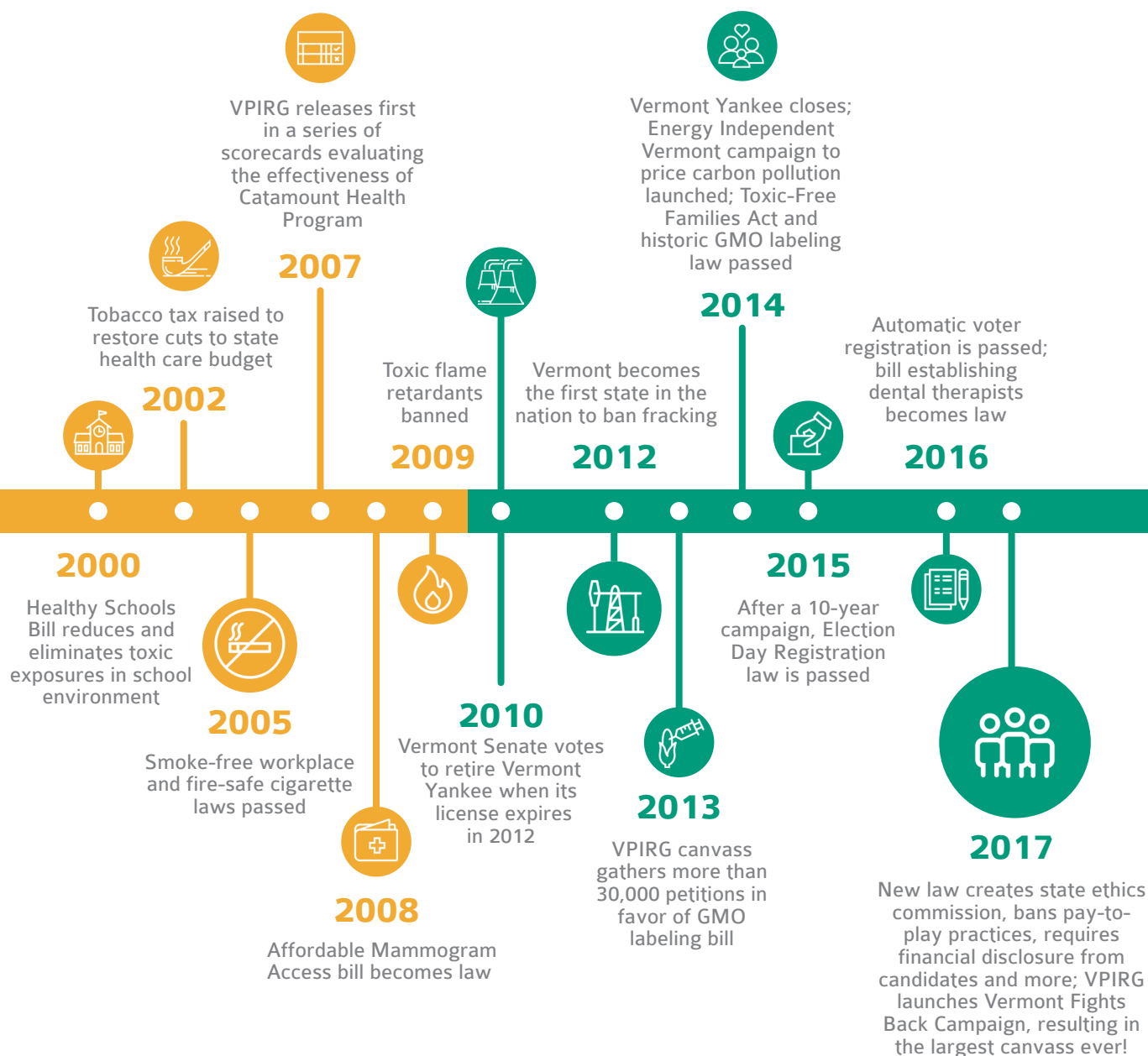
## A TIMELINE





## In 2017 VPIRG celebrated 45 years fighting for the public interest in Vermont!

A lot has changed since our founding in 1972, but one constant is our commitment to protecting the health and well-being of Vermont's people and environment. Check out some of the tremendous victories we've won together for Vermonters these past 45 years:

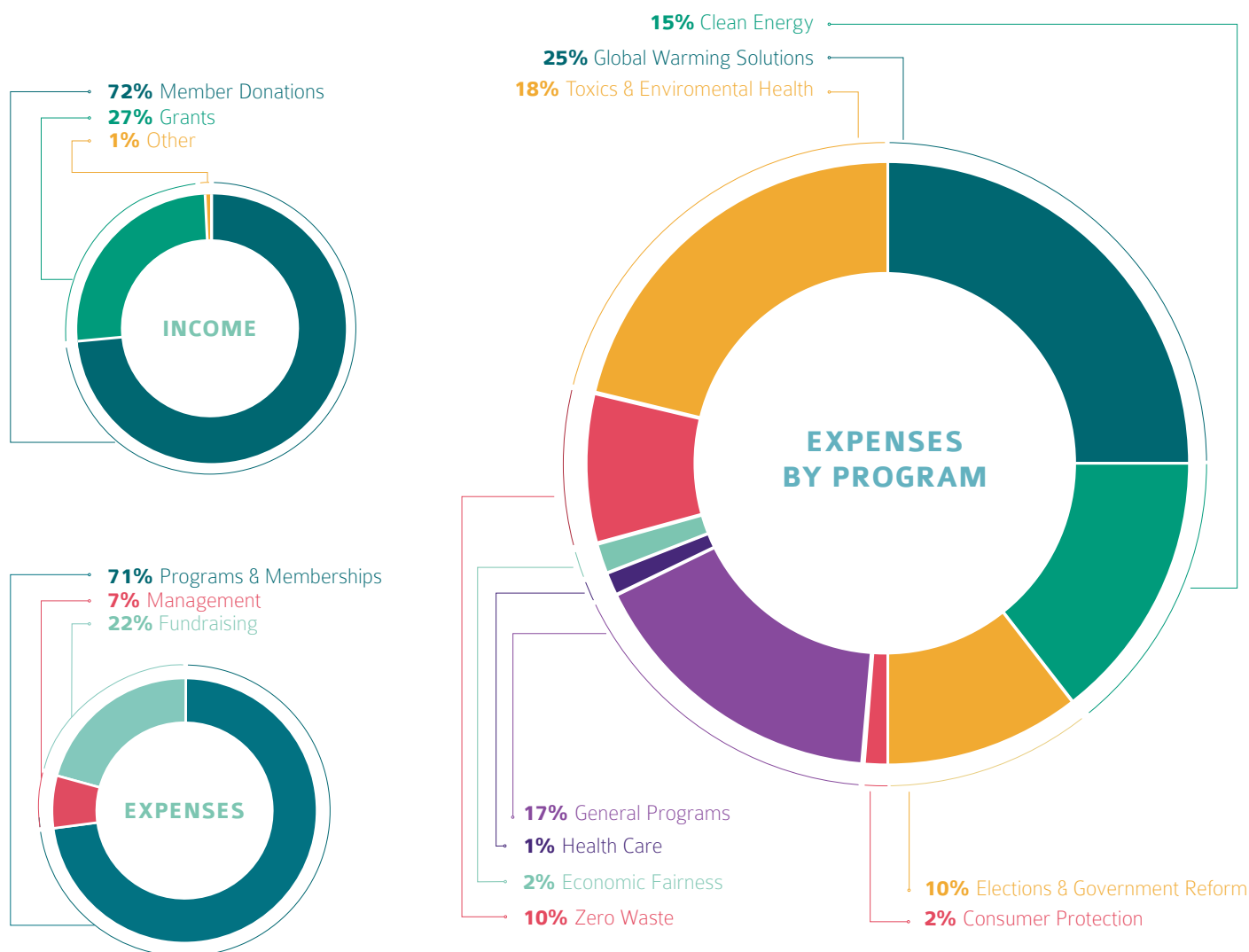


# Powered by You: Our 2017 Finances by the Numbers

In 2017, thousands of Vermonters stepped up with grassroots contributions to power our work. We received more individual gifts from more Vermonters than any time in our history. The big-money special interests don't fund groups like ours, and we wouldn't take it if they did. We're a people-powered organization and we're proud of it. We couldn't advance the public interest without you – so thank you.

VPIRG and VPIREF combined income totaled \$2,571,926, of which more than \$1.77 million came from individual member donations, 37% of that coming from our monthly sustaining members. Combined expenses totaled \$2,791,126. Program expenses and member services account for nearly three quarters of our expenses.

	VPIRG	VPIREF	TOTAL
<b>Income</b>	\$1,499,671	\$1,072,255	\$2,571,926
<b>Expenses</b>	\$933,342	\$1,857,784	\$2,791,126





# People Power: Recognizing Our Supporters

## At VPIRG, our members are our strength.

Your financial support and grassroots muscle make VPIRG effective. Last year alone, VPIRG supporters made more than 58,000 individual donations and took more than 42,000 actions (signing petitions, contacting lawmakers, writing letters to the editor, etc.) Together

we were able to fight back against the attacks on our people and environment and chart a better path forward. Thank you for your support.

Check out these profiles of a few of our standout members and see a partial list of our members on the next page.



### Bob “The Green Guy” Farnham

Bob “The Green Guy” Farnham is a long-time VPIRG member, activist and digital organizer extraordinaire. Bob’s in-person and online presence is a staple in the Vermont climate movement and an invaluable asset to many VPIRG (and non-VPIRG) campaigns.

From Facebook to Twitter, to online blogging and the radio waves, Bob is a leading citizen advocate for climate action, energy and transportation transformation, sustainable food systems and more.

In 2017, Bob played an important role in bringing transparency and engagement to the Climate Action Commission’s public hearings. By live streaming and promoting each of the hearings, Bob brought the important conversations surrounding Vermont’s commitments to climate action directly to Vermonters at the comfort and convenience of their own home – using digital technologies to spread democracy and civic participation!

This is just one of countless examples of Bob’s dedication to environmental activism and knack for digital organizing – making civic engagement on critical issues more accessible, transparent and impactful. Learn more about Bob “The Green Guy” Farnham’s work at [bobthegreenguy.com](http://bobthegreenguy.com) and follow him on Facebook at [facebook.com/bobthegreenguy](https://facebook.com/bobthegreenguy)



### George Longenecker & Cynthia Martin

George and Cynthia are two of VPIRG’s longest, most consistent members. They’ve been donating to and supporting VPIRG since 1983! From taking action in support of clean energy, affordable health care, net neutrality and more – they’ve been part of almost all of VPIRG’s campaigns.

Both George and Cynthia take an active role in their community. George is retired from Vermont Technical College, where he was Professor and Chair of the Department of English, Humanities and Social Sciences. He currently serves the town of Middlesex on its Budget Committee and Conservation Commission. He is on the Board of the Directors of the Green Mountain Club. He is also a writer and photographer. His poems have been published in many journals, and he has a new book, *Star Route*.

Cynthia is a retired educator who taught primary grades for 30 years, most of them at Calais Elementary School. She previously served on the Board of the Green Mountain Club and is a frequent trail volunteer. In fact, Cynthia has hiked the Long Trail end to end. She is a dedicated composter who likes the challenge and satisfaction of creating new soil from kitchen scraps.

In their retirement, the pair have taken to traveling – visiting the Cumberland Island National Seashore, Okefenokee Wildlife Refuge, Alaska’s Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and Rocky Mountain National Park.

George and Cynthia’s long-term dedication to promoting the health and well-being of Vermont’s people and environment is incredibly admirable and exactly what makes VPIRG members such a special group of people.



### Marianne Barton

In 2017, VPIRG was lucky to see one of our longest and most-dedicated members become our newest Board member – as Marianne Barton became a VPIRG trustee.

Marianne has used her innate entrepreneurial skill over a 30-year career to successfully launch and lead both for-profit and not-for-profit enterprises. As a social entrepreneur, Marianne was a founding member and now serves as a trustee of the Circle School, a Sudbury-inspired democratic school in Harrisburg, PA. She founded her first company at 23, launching the first green real estate development firm in Pennsylvania. Marianne later brought her talents into the areas of electronics, communications technology, and the green energy sector.

Marianne currently serves as co-founder of Catalyst Clean Energy Finance, LLC, and co-chair of Vermont’s Energy Action Network’s Capital Mobilization workgroup.

In her retirement, Marianne has taken to running an AirBnB with her husband Bob, where she says she’s been able to take a commitment to service that she often applied globally, and concentrate it literally in her own backyard – connecting with her guests and deepening understanding through individual conversations (something we know a thing about at VPIRG).

VPIRG is fortunate and thankful to have her unique perspective on our Board.



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**Note: While we wish we could thank every single member in this annual report, it's impossible to list the thousands of VPIRG supporters statewide. The generosity of those listed in this report deserves special recognition.**

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