



2022 Annual Report



New York Public Interest Research Group Fund

From Our Executive Director

Last year, New York State proposed the establishment of the \$4.2 billion Clean Water, Clean Air, and Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act of 2022, and put the question to voters in the November 2022 election. By a two-to-one margin, voters overwhelmingly supported the measure, illustrating a broad public understanding that climate change is real, and that the state must adapt to it before it is too late.

New Yorkers – of all political persuasions – believe in protecting the environment. But the Bond Act victory can only be viewed as a big first step. New York faces tens of billions of dollars in looming climate crisis expenses. The question facing policymakers will be: Who pays? NYPIRG believes that it should be the oil companies, as they definitely have the money. Moreover, the oil and gas industry is indeed to blame, having known for decades that the burning of fossil fuels would lead to global warming. Instead of taking responsibility, they engaged in a campaign of aggressive climate denial and decades of opposition to environmental protection legislation and international treaties. It is now time for this industry to learn a basic childhood lesson: If you make a mess, you are responsible for cleaning it up. NYPIRG will strive to hold polluters accountable – and make certain that Big Oil cannot pass the charges onto consumers!

NYPIRG will also continue to push for increased reliance on electricity generated by solar, wind, and geothermal, and advocate for a program to ensure that New York is reaching its climate goals. Protecting public health will mean renewing our efforts to safeguard drinking water supplies from toxic contaminants. We will work to reduce energy, consumer, and transportation costs. And, of course, we will continue our fight to strengthen New York's democracy – a fight to curtail the power of wealthy special interests, professionalize the state's elections, and reduce ethical conflicts of interest for policymakers.

As always, our work would not be possible without our incredible supporters, volunteers, staff, and partners. To all of you, my sincere thanks and appreciation. Onward!

---Blair Horner

Our Mission

The New York Public Interest Research Group Fund (NYPIRG) is a non-partisan, nonprofit, research and public education organization dedicated to enhancing the public voice in critical public policy debates in order to strengthen democracy, enhance the rights of consumers and voters, and protect the environment and public health in New York. Over the past four decades, we have educated hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers, recruited thousands of community members from all parts of the state, conducted research, produced studies and reports, and promoted key public interest issues in the media, enhancing NYPIRG's institutional impact and empowering New Yorkers.

Fossil Free Future Campaign

NYPIRG launched its Fossil-Free Future Campaign to make New York State a national and global leader in the fight to combat the devastating effects of climate change. Future generations are depending on us to protect them from climate catastrophe caused by global warming.

Across the United States, temperature changes, coastal flooding, roaring wildfires, and threatened drinking water supplies are just a few of the projected impacts of climate change in the 21st century. Climate change is having devastating impacts on New York's economy, infrastructure, public health, coastal areas, and natural ecosystems. The state experienced 51 billion-dollar weather disaster events due to the climate crisis from 2000 to 2021 at an estimated cost of \$50-\$100 billion, according to a recent federal report by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Since the 1970s, the fossil fuel industry has known the environmental risks associated with burning fossil fuels and accurately predicted the timetable in which those changes would occur. Avoiding responsibility, the industry used its considerable clout to withhold the evidence from the public, undermine climate science, and hire consultants and lobbyists to derail health and environmental reforms.

The goals of NYPIRG's Fossil Free Future Campaign are:

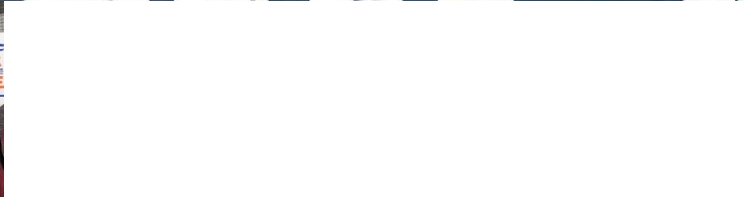
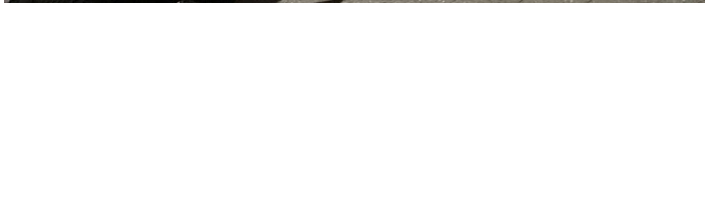
- support and promote meaningful and practical policies to help New York achieve its climate goals;
- demonstrate strong public support for climate solutions;
- press for funding for environmental programs and for policies that hold corporate polluters responsible for their role in the climate crisis;
- train and activate the next generation of climate activists;
- call for transparency and accountability measures so that the public knows if New York is meeting its climate goals.

Victory! *New York allocated \$4.2 billion for the Clean Water & Clean Air Environmental Bond Act, to help the State combat climate change, protect drinking water and respond to solid waste pollution—including funding for climate friendly, electric school buses.*

Victory! *New York State denied permits for two critical fossil fuel infrastructure projects – the Danskammer Power Plant in Newburgh and the Astoria Power Plant in Queens – a huge win for New York's climate and air quality.*

Victory! *New York enacted three significant climate bills that help place New York in the national forefront on energy efficient standards, expansion of thermal energy projects, and in support of a just transition for fossil fuel workers into a renewable energy future.*





NYPIRG climate activists in action

Top left and right: NYPIRG activists join with the NY Renews Coalition at a Make Polluters Pay rally in Union Square, NYC.

Middle right: NYPIRG activists call for electrification of buildings at a news conference in New York City.

Lower left and right: NYPIRG students and activists participate in the Climate Can't Wait Rally in Albany.

Taking Action on Climate Change

Examples of our work this year:

- Released our annual Climate Scorecard to serve as a blueprint for how the state could maintain progress toward its climate goals.
- Solicited and submitted comments on the Climate Action Council's Draft Scoping Plan.
- Organized and participated in dozens of media events and rallies across the state that brought together students, residents, and community groups in support of pro-climate policies.
- Brought together dozens of organizations across the state to highlight the need for state action on climate goals including: calling for the fossil fuel industry to contribute fairly to New York State's climate mitigating costs, ending tax loopholes for the fossil fuel industry, and policies to support New York State's climate goals.

Victory! \$400 million was allocated for the Environmental Protection Fund to support projects critical for protecting water, combating climate change, and keeping public spaces clean.

Victory! The State Legislature passed a moratorium on cryptocurrency mining (signed by the Governor in November 2022).

New York State Climate Act 2022 Scorecard

New Yorkers have been told that their State will move aggressively to tackle the climate crisis. However, the State has not yet provided annual reporting on the progress that it is making toward those critical goals. Three years ago, the State promised progress. NYPIRG's Scorecard reviews publicly available information to chart the State's progress and will continue to do so until New York's government produces its own.

Findings highlights:

- *The State is failing to achieve greenhouse gas emission reduction goals. It is imperative to meet legally mandated goals, guided by a recommended NYS 2022-2050 Climate Action Plan, Annual Progress Reports and Scorecards.*
- *The State is behind schedule in taking action on the largest greenhouse gas emission sectors of buildings and transportation.*
- *The State is on track with proposals to expand renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar, energy storage and efficiency if the approval and implementation timetables move forward rapidly.*

Electrifying New York

New York's Climate Law mandates 100% carbon free electricity by 2040, and net-zero GHG emissions by 2050. A gas ban for new construction and major renovations is a necessary step to achieving these goals, as buildings make up 70% of New York City's GHG emissions and 60% of the State's. It also sets a precedent for other municipalities and states to take similar ambitious, significant, and pragmatic actions to combat climate change. Ending new gas hook ups for buildings would combat the climate crisis by slashing fossil fuel use; create clean energy jobs; prevent gas explosions and fires; and prevent more deadly local air pollution.

NYPIRG, in partnership with New York Communities for Change, Food & Water Watch and WEACTION-NY, led organizing efforts to raise public support for electrification of new construction and major renovations in New York City and New York State. We held a series of educational events, turned out New Yorkers in force to rallies, news conferences and actions in New York City and Albany, and brought together over 200 organizations to voice their support for building policies to help achieve state climate goals.

Victory! *New York City mandates that all new buildings must be all-electric starting with small buildings in 2024 and buildings over seven stories by 2027.*



Safeguarding Drinking Water

Six years ago, NYPIRG launched a new, comprehensive effort to protect and improve drinking water resources in New York. We developed and released What's In My Water?, an online tool to educate New Yorkers about the state of their drinking water, the presence of contaminants found through laboratory testing, and location and nature of some potential threats to local drinking water.

Our work has increased public access to information about drinking water supplies, raised the profile of drinking water issues in New York at the state and federal level, and led to critical improvements and protections for New York's drinking water.

Victory! A longstanding federal loophole is closed that excluded public water systems serving fewer than 10,000 residents from having to test for emerging contaminants. By including a specific list of emerging contaminants that have already been detected in New York's larger public water supplies and giving a deadline for the New York Health Department to establish the list, more New Yorkers will be able to know what's in their water.

Victory! Legislation is signed to tighten testing requirements and standards pertaining to lead in school drinking water.

Victory! Legislation is signed enabling the Department of Agriculture to encourage soil health practices that will help store and draw carbon from the atmosphere, prevent erosion and flooding, and protect water quality.

Victory! New York's Freshwater Wetlands Regulatory Program is revamped to protect up to 1 million additional acres, for wetlands 7.4 acres or more, and smaller areas of "unusual importance."



Solid Waste Reduction

Plastic pollution is a global problem – creating millions of tons of non-biodegradable plastic waste that pollutes our oceans and natural environments, impacts food chains, and harms wildlife. In New York State, the solid waste crisis is at a critical level. Recycling, reuse, and reduction rates must improve or landfills will fill past capacity and incinerators will continue to spew toxic waste by burning garbage. Packaging manufacturers must also reduce and detoxify packaging wastes.

NYPIRG has been instrumental in bringing together a large coalition of organizations and businesses to raise public awareness about the plastic and municipal waste crisis, and ways the state can address the issue. More than 200 community organizations and businesses signed one or more open letters to state leaders in support of policies to expand recycling and reduce chemicals and other toxins in consumer packaging.

To raise the profile of the issue, NYPIRG organized a statewide *Bottle Bill 40* media tour featuring a 15-foot inflatable bottle with stops in Buffalo, Syracuse, Binghamton, Albany, Hudson Valley, New York City and Long Island. On May 18th, NYPIRG, alongside other groups and elected officials, held a 40th Birthday Party news conference for the New York State Bottle Bill. Organizers and advocates celebrated the success of the landmark recycling law, while emphasizing the need for additional measures to reduce litter, increase recycling up to 90%, and boost support for municipal recycling and environmental justice programs in order to address the solid waste crisis.

Victory! Legislation signed banning hotels from providing small plastic bottles that contain shampoos, conditioners, and more – a small and simple step the State can take to further reduce plastic pollution.

NYPIRG's Giant Inflatable Bottle visits downtown Syracuse during the Bigger Better Bottle Bill statewide media tour.

Photo credit: [Ellen Abbott, WRVO](#)



Empowering Voters and Protecting Democracy

New Voter Engagement Project

It has been well-established that the key to future voter participation is engagement early in adulthood. NYPIRG's New Voter Engagement Project seeks to: (1) Recruit and train students across the state through experiential learning to register and mobilize their peers to vote; (2) Conduct public education efforts about voter policies being considered at the local and national level; and (3) Foster lifelong voting and civic participation habits among young voters. A key priority is expanding voting access to college students. Our efforts paid off when New York State included a mandate for poll sites on or near college campuses where more than 300 active registered student voters reside in the final 2022 budget. We also conducted education and public outreach in support of other policies that reduce barriers to voting, like eliminating voter registration deadlines and no-excuse absentee voting. We will continue this work to expand voting rights and increase voter participation among young adults.

Victory! For the first time, all eligible students who live at a college campus with at least 300 active registered voters will be able to vote at a poll site placed at, or near, their college campus.

National Voter Registration Day

2021 marked the 10-year anniversary of National Voter Registration Day (NVRD). NYPIRG was selected as the New York State Lead organization for NVRD 2021. In that role, we engaged 215 partner organizations and over 10,000 students across the state – providing trainings to teach and train NVRD partners how to organize and run an effective NVRD event and the mechanics of registering voters, and distributing a New York-specific NVRD digital and social media packet. We also held individual meetings with partner groups including the Brooklyn Public Library, CUNY Votes, New York Public Library, NYC Votes, Queens Public Library, and YWCA of Mohawk Valley.



Promoting Open and Accountable Government

The incredible scandals and controversies that have rocked the state capital in recent years have provided an opportunity for NYPIRG to research and offer best ethics practices to guide policymakers in their debate over needed reforms. NYPIRG continued to be a leading voice in support of government practices that are open, accountable, and that best serve the public.

- Developed and released our new “Representative Finder” that allows New Yorkers to look up the names and contact information of their state and national representatives. In New York City, residents can also look up their city representatives.
- Maintained and updated our “Legislative Profiles” which allow New Yorkers easy access to background information on their state legislators. The profiles list relevant committee assignments, outside income information, the most recent election results, the identity of significant campaign contributors, as well as information about the demographic and partisan makeup of the district’s population.
- In coalition with other good government groups, called for JCOPE to be disbanded and for the creation of a truly independent ethics commission in the state budget.

Victory! A “Database of Deals” was established to better help oversee the state’s vast economic subsidy programs.

- Released Tale of the Tape: NYPIRG’s 2022 Legislative Review, our annual review of the New York State Legislative session.
- Produced and Released our annual Albany Money Machine report, documenting the number of fundraisers held in person, virtually, or by leadership – totaling 137 in 2022.
- Continued shining a light on government practices via dozens of news articles and op-eds.



Protecting Public Health

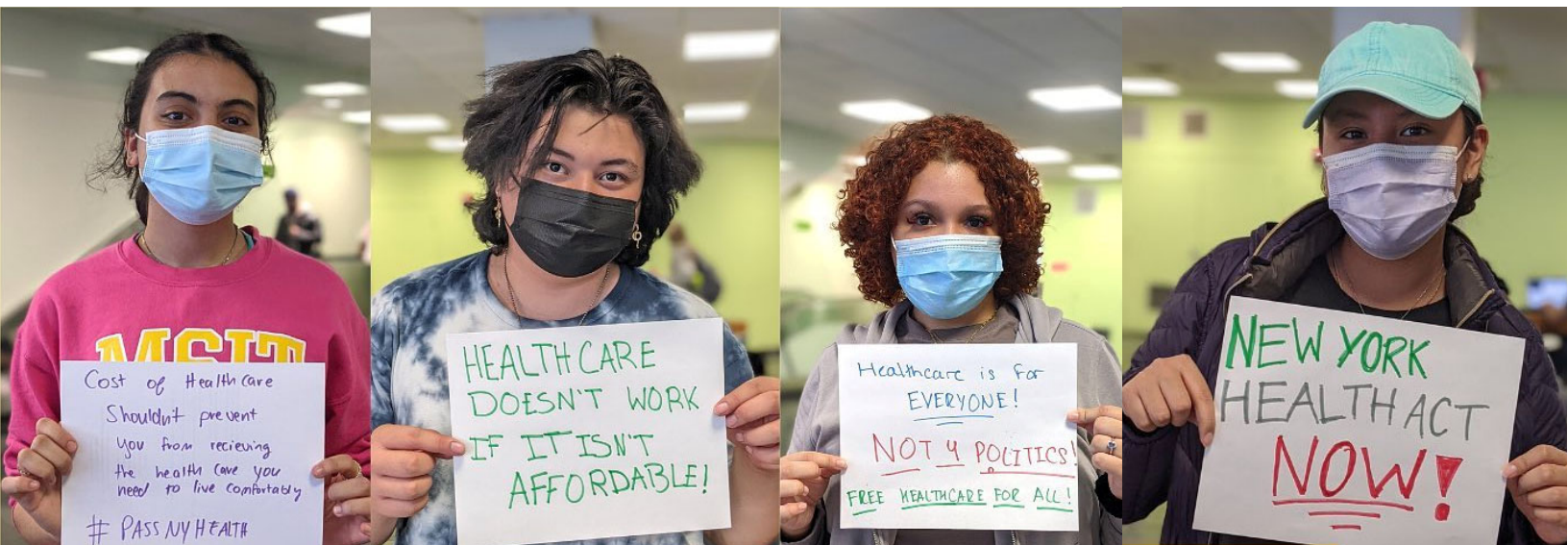
Health care in the U.S. leaves too many people out, costs too much and does not meet acceptable standards of quality. NYPIRG is working toward solutions that will shift the healthcare system to focus on ensuring that everyone is covered, that the state's regulators ensure the highest quality of care, that drug prices are monitored and reduced, and that public health programs benefit from enhanced state investments. We also worked to reduce the overuse and misuse of antibiotics in medical, community, and farm settings and update the state's antiquated wrongful death laws.

- Joined with lawmakers and health, animal welfare, and consumer organizations to call for a ban on the use of antibiotics in food-producing animals for the purposes of disease prevention'
- Cosponsored and participated in a forum on Health Equity and Access to Healthcare in Upstate NY and a rally for universal health care outside Lincoln Hospital in the Bronx.
- Released a survey of State Wrongful Death Laws that showed New York at the bottom in terms of recognizing family losses and alongside families who have lost loved ones and policymakers, called for the modernization of New York's Wrongful Death law.

Victory! Summer overnight and summer day camps cannot apply pesticides to any playgrounds, turf, or athletic or playing fields.

Victory! Legislation is passed that prohibits a lien being placed on a person's primary residence and prohibiting wage garnishment for medical debt judgments.

Victory! Legislation is passed that requires the disclosure of "facility fees," which are expenses charged by hospitals to cover their overhead, and to inform patients in advance if the fees will be covered by their insurance.



Ensuring Access to Quality and Affordable Public Higher Education

NYPIRG's Higher Education Project educates and engages students on college accessibility and affordability issues.

College-educated workers earn more than their high school educated peers. However, since 2011, tuition at senior public colleges and universities has increased significantly. Other costs associated with getting a college degree – textbooks, housing, childcare, food, and transit – have also gone up, while State funding for operating budgets and financial aid programs has not kept pace with inflation or program needs.

To raise public awareness about the increased state investment in higher education, NYPIRG circulated and delivered a statewide petition from over 6,600 students, faculty, and administrators, highlighting the challenges and increased financial burden that today's college students are facing.

***Victory!** NYPIRG's longstanding efforts to increase state investment in public higher education resulted in significant victories for public college students in the final State Budget including:*

- *\$500 million in additional public college operating support;*
- *a major increase and expansion of the state's largest college students' financial assistance, the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP), to part-time students and incarcerated individuals; and*
- *additional funding to hire faculty and expand childcare programs, mental health services, and opportunity programs.*



Fighting for Consumer Rights

The Case for a Public Bank

NYPIRG is a member of Public Bank NYC, a coalition of more than 40 organizations across the city who support the creation of a public bank. Public Banking is a strategy to advance racial, economic and environmental justice by investing in a municipally controlled and publicly accountable bank. A public bank is a financial institution that is owned and controlled by a government body and chartered to serve the public interest. Throughout the year, organizers and volunteers with NYPIRG hosted and participated in a number of news events, virtual rallies, social media action days, stakeholder meetings, educational workshops, and other activities to raise awareness and support for public banking in New York. NYPIRG staff and volunteers also participated in a Public Bank Day of Action in Albany.

Small Claims Court Action Centers

Since 1977, NYPIRG has offered help to New Yorkers with consumer problems and complaints, such as the purchase of defective goods, shoddy services, unreturned security deposits, property damage or falling victim to deceptive business practices. For many, New York's Small Claims Courts – the original "People's Court" – is the place for them to seek justice. In partnership with our affiliate, NYPIRG counselors across the state provide procedural information to consumers about the small claims court system in New York State via our [Small Claims Court Action Centers](#). This year, we increased outreach to community organizations, expanded our number of counselors and clients served, made systems-wide administration improvements, and added a [Spanish Language Small Claims Court Action Center page](#) to our website.

Victory! *First-in-the-nation legislation is enacted to require digital product manufacturers to provide access to replacement parts, repair software, tools and instructions so that New Yorkers and independent repair shops can fix – rather than replace -- a wide range of devices including cell phones and laptops, cutting waste and saving them money.*

The Right to Repair

Almost all the products we use in our personal lives are now digital. They're expensive, they typically contain sophisticated electronics and their useful life is limited. When these products – smartphones, tablets, laptops, cameras, etc. – break down as they inevitably do, consumers were often left with two choices: pay for expensive manufacturer repairs or buy a new item. This is bad for two reasons: It encourages "planned obsolescence," which is a huge environmental problem; and it costs consumers more than is fair to repair or replace the product. The 2022 legislative victory above bridges our consumer and environmental work. This "fair repair" legislation requires manufacturers to make available to consumers and independent repair shops the information (like diagrams), diagnostic and other tools and parts on a fair basis to provide a viable choice to fix the item rather than trash or replace it. NYPIRG will continue pressing for measures that allow consumers to make informed decisions and promote consumer choice.

Improving Mass Transit Access and Affordability

For the past four decades, NYPIRG's Straphangers Campaign has been a leader in the fight for safe, affordable, and reliable mass transit in New York City. Our reports, media, advocacy, and public education efforts highlighted the need for a greater investment in transit infrastructure, and for improvements to make the system more accessible to all riders. Proper investment in public transportation will help fix historic inequities, deliver racial justice, and combat climate change. As a lead member of the Bus Turnaround Coalition, we helped to drive a public narrative that centers on rider experience and the problem of poor bus service by putting riders front and center of media outreach and organizing efforts.

Transform Transit Petitions

Collected over 1,200 college student signatures calling for implementation of permanent new operating funds for New York City bus and subway systems, and implementation of Congestion Pricing without delay.

***Victory!** Avoiding a fiscal cliff and deep service cuts, advocates won \$4 billion in federal stimulus aid for the MTA in late 2020, and \$11 billion from the national Infrastructure Bill for capital projects in 2021.*

Pokey and Schleppeie Bus Awards

The Straphangers Campaign and TransitCenter issued our 17th annual "awards" to highlight deficiencies and areas of improvement in bus service, and to provide riders with accurate information about the speed and reliability of their own routes. This year's Pokey Award for slowest bus route was awarded to the M102, and the Schleppeie award for the least reliable bus route was awarded to the B12. New York City Transit President Richard Davey showed up in person to receive the "award" admitting to the crowd and the media that there is lots of work to be done!

Bus Lane Painting Party

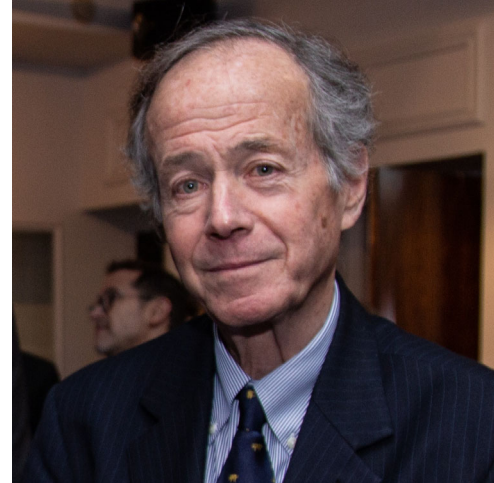
Bus Lane Painting Party — With paint brushes in hand, college students, transit advocates, and elected officials celebrated Bus Lane Painting Season outside City Hall. The painters celebrated the details just released from Mayor Adams, the MTA, and NYC Department of Transportation (DOT) around the neighborhoods that will see 20 new miles of bus lanes and busways in 2022.



Bus lanes and busways speed up commute times, are critical transit improvements for communities underserved by the subway system, and can be installed quickly and affordably compared to subway expansions. They must be installed during warm weather months and the season was upon us.

As the event unfolded, large paper renderings of 21st Street in Astoria, Queens and Fordham Road and Gun Hill Road in the Bronx were rolled out and painted red to re-envision the streets with bus lanes and busways rather than congested with passenger cars. The painters were also joined by City Councilmember Gale Brewer and City Councilmember Sandy Nurse.

Remembering Donald K. Ross



Donald Ross, NYPIRG's first executive director, passed away on May 14, 2022. One of the original "Nader's Raiders," Donald was the father of the Public Interest Research Groups (PIRGs). It was Donald's genius to see that a better world could be created by harnessing the energy, idealism, and smarts of college students. Not only could public policies be improved, but the experience of civic engagement would make these younger adults better citizens. Donald's book, "Action for a Change" offered a blueprint for college student activism, with a formula that focused on accomplishments, bite-sized policy victories that could cascade into fundamental changes in governance. His book soon led to the establishment of dozens of PIRGs in states across the country.

Donald's vision soon turned into personal practical application when, in 1973, he became the executive director of NYPIRG. From a handful of staff and dozens of student volunteers working on college campuses, he transformed NYPIRG into one of New York's leading environmental and consumer advocacy organizations. His work taking on the nuclear power industry after the near-catastrophic Three Mile Island partial meltdown put NYPIRG on the national stage, with massive rallies in Washington DC and New York City.

NYPIRG's work expanded into tough environmental challenges helping to launch clean-ups through a state Superfund program. Under his leadership, the Straphangers Campaign, NYPIRG's well-known project, was launched. Among the many policy successes, Donald's work touched the lives of hundreds of college students. For many of these individuals, Donald's work led to life-changing career experiences. And as his vision was played out across the country, thousands of students' lives were transformed. Essentially, NYPIRG became an "advocacy graduate school" for political organizers who went on to run state and national groups.

After he left NYPIRG in 1982, he went on to work at the Rockefeller Family Fund, helped establish the Environmental Grantmakers Association, chaired Greenpeace USA, and founded the law firm Malkin & Ross, as well as M+R, a consulting firm that was instrumental in winning hundreds of policy victories over the years, most notably in recent years around the issue of juvenile justice reform.

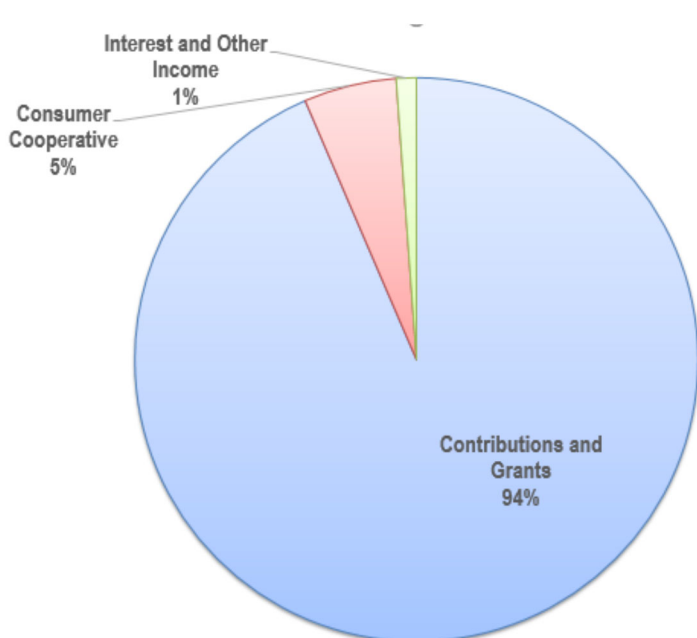
For those of us at NYPIRG, as well as the networks of PIRGs and other allied organizations, we owe more than we can express to Donald and his work.



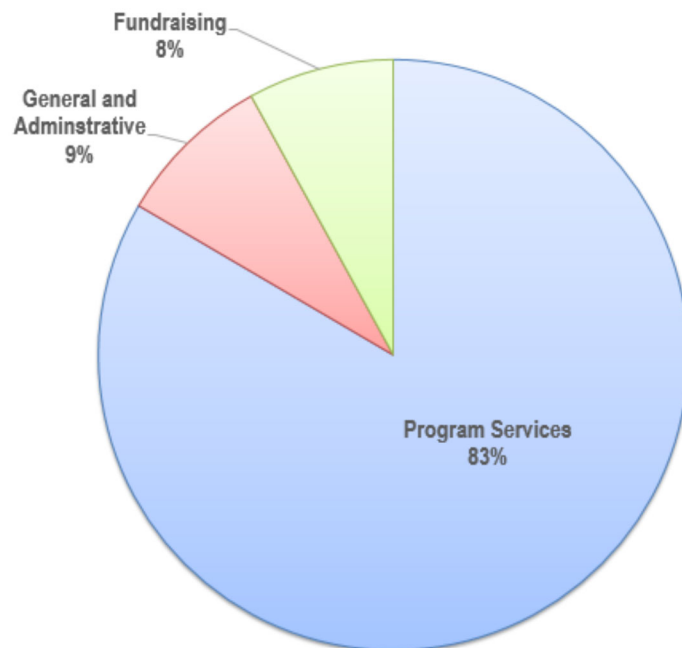
Donald Ross meeting with President Jimmy Carter in 1979 during the anti-nuclear demonstrations. 1979 demonstrations.

Financial Overview and Contact Information

The following is an overview of NYPIRG's income and expenses for the fiscal year ending August 31, 2022.



Income



Expenses

Board of Directors

Jay Halfon, President
 Lisa Howard, Treasurer
 Chris Meyer, Secretary
 Neysa Pranger, Director
 Camille Rivera, Director

Executive Director

Blair Horner

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