From Our Executive Director

To our supporters, volunteers, staff, and partners -- thank you for making 2019 one of the most successful and productive years in NYPIRG’s history. With your help, we successfully fought for: improvements in how elections are conducted and new provisions that empower voters; billions of dollars for drinking water systems and mass transit infrastructure; restrictions on toxics in children’s products and dangerous chemicals that threaten drinking water; and a commitment to generate 70% of New York’s electricity from renewables by 2040 and achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

We are so proud of our work, and yet, as always, there is still much to do. The looming climate crisis is the greatest challenge we face, and we must redouble our efforts to fight global warming by ardently opposing the expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure and pushing for clean, renewable power. We must keep pressure on government to live up to its promises to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions and hold the fossil fuel industry accountable for their efforts to bamboozle the public on the dangers of global warming.

We will continue to advocate for a reduction in plastic pollution, affordable and accessible mass transit, civic empowerment, policies that protect consumers and the public health, all the while shining a light on government corruption.

As I write this, the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic threaten so many. Be assured that NYPIRG will be involved in efforts to make health care more accessible and more affordable, safeguard drinking water supplies, ensure that price gouging is punished, and protect democratic and civic rights.

Year after year, NYPIRG drives public attention to the key issues of the day and has a meaningful, positive impact on policies that affect all New Yorkers. On behalf of everyone at the organization, thank you for making our work possible.
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.
Taking Action on Climate Change

Climate change is the most urgent issue of our time. The last five years have been the hottest in recorded history, and a warming planet has dire consequences. Climate change causes extreme weather – bringing more intense and frequent heat waves, severe droughts, heavier rainfall, dangerous flooding, and outbreaks of deadly disease. With climate deniers firmly in control of national policies, it is up to the states to hold corporate polluters accountable.

In a landmark victory for New Yorkers and the environment, New York State signed the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, one of the strongest pieces of legislation in the country and includes goals to achieve an 85% cut in greenhouse gas emissions below 1990 levels by 2050, 70% of statewide energy generation from renewable energy systems by 2040, and more. The legislation also includes goals for expansion of off-shore wind and solar energy.

NYPIRG has been an integral part of the movement to fight climate change in New York over the past decade – educating and activating tens of thousands of residents annually, organizing events, engaging the media, and partnering with environmental and community organizations across the state. NYPIRG has also been active in efforts to halt oil and gas infrastructure development like the proposed Williams Oil and Gas pipeline – organizing community events and soliciting thousands of comments and petition signatures from the public in opposition to fossil fuel infrastructure. We will continue our vigilant efforts to ensure that New York State meets its ambitious climate goals, and help make New York a leader in combatting the greatest threat to our planet.

Victory! New York State enacts historic legislation to fight climate change, with goals to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, and 100% carbon-free electricity by 2040

Bottom left: NYPIRG and other activists host a news conference at New York City Hall calling for a halt to the proposed Williams Pipeline. Bottom right: NYPIRG staff and volunteers help drop off 27,000 petitions to Governor Cuomo urging him to be a climate leader.
Safeguarding Drinking Water

New Yorkers have a right to know about the water in their tap. In 2017, NYPIRG released “What’s In My Water?”, a one-stop, comprehensive, statewide compilation and analysis of New York drinking water systems, along with an interactive, online tool for the public to access information about their local drinking water supply.

NYPIRG staff and volunteers collected and delivered more than 4,500 petitions highlighting the need for New York State to make a significant investment in its drinking water infrastructure.

NYPIRG released an analysis of data for perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA/PFOS) and 1,4-dioxane contamination in New York. The analysis found that millions of New Yorkers are exposed to unsafe levels of these contaminants. Following the release of this analysis, New York’s Drinking Water Quality Council (DWQC) announced their recommendations for Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) for PFOA, PFOS, and 1,4-dioxane. NYPIRG provided oral comments and pressed for stronger action by the Department of Health.

NYPIRG wrote and released a report on the threat of emerging contaminants in New York’s drinking water systems. Key findings included that: (1) one or more UCMR-3 contaminants, were detected in 176 water systems, affecting nearly 16 million New Yorkers; (2) The Long Island region has, by far, the most detections of emerging contaminants in drinking water; (3) Seven UCMR-3 emerging contaminants were detected above the Environmental Protection Agency’s reference concentrations; and (4) 6.4 million New York State residents served by smaller public systems or private wells consume water that has not been tested for emerging contaminants.

Victory! The Long Island Congressional Delegation calls on the EPA to set drinking water standards for PFOA, PFOS, and 1,4-dioxane

Victory! New York bans PFAS firefighting foam

Victory! The Governor and Department of Health announce the start of a formal regulatory process to set drinking water standards for PFOA, PFOS, and 1,4-dioxane in New York

NYPIRG Environmental Policy Director Liz Moran discusses NYPIRG’s report on the dangers of emerging contaminants in drinking water at a news conference in Albany.
Addressing the Plastic Pollution Crisis

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. Experts estimate that over eight million tons of plastic waste end up in the world’s oceans each year, and that amount is likely to increase dramatically over the next decade unless nations act.

NYPIRG is working to build a movement across the state in support of policies that reduce plastic use and remove plastic from the waste stream:

- activating New Yorkers to create a public demand for reducing plastic waste at community meetings, through direct one-on-one engagement, and via online and digital engagement
- participating in public hearings and meeting with community leaders
- releasing a policy paper, examining the impacts of plastic bag waste and the benefits of a ban on single use bags

Victory! New York State bans single-use plastic bags

On April 29th, NYPIRG and other environmental partners brought together over 200 residents and representatives from community groups from across New York City for “Beyond Plastics,” a discussion on the devastating effects of plastics pollution and what communities can and must do to reduce the production and use of single-use plastics. The event featured former EPA Regional Director and founder of Beyond Plastics Judith Enck, and was one of several community events and meetings we hosted.
Protecting Public Health

From helping New Yorkers protect themselves from skyrocketing drug prices and toxic chemicals, to advocating for patient rights, to ensuring accessibility to high quality and affordable medical care, NYPIRG takes on a broad range of topics to protect public health.

Prescription Drug Pricing
Health care costs are a significant concern and expense for New Yorkers across the state. In addition to the expense, one of most frustrating aspects of the health care system is the variation in pricing for the same products and services. NYPIRG released Buyer Beware: A Guide to Prescription Drug Pricing in New York, a report highlighting discrepancies in prescription drug pricing across the state, and calling for measures to improve the state Drug Pricing law.

Tobacco Control
The leading cause of lung cancer is tobacco use, and lung cancer is responsible for one quarter of all cancer deaths. In 1998, a Master Settlement Agreement was reached between New York State and tobacco companies over the sale of their deadly products. Since then, New York State has collected nearly $40 billion in revenue from tobacco companies and taxes and fees on tobacco products, but funding for tobacco prevention and cessation programs has declined significantly. NYPIRG released a report, “Dissipated; 20 Years of the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement and the Failure to Adequately Fund Tobacco Control in New York,” calling for New York to:
- increase tobacco control funding to at least $140 million annually
- target resources to areas of the state hit hardest by tobacco use
- tax E-Cigarettes at the equivalence of combustible cigarettes and use those revenues for tobacco control efforts

Antibiotic-Resistant “Superbugs”
A growing public health threat is the rise of “Superbugs,” which are antibiotic-resistant bacteria that can cause serious harm or death to patients infected with them. NYPIRG joined over 70 national and state organizations in calling for New York State to take action to address this public health threat, specifically by prohibiting the use of medically important antibiotics for “disease prevention” in food-producing animals and by setting up reporting mechanisms to monitor their use in agriculture and track the emergence of antibiotic-resistant infections.

Bottom Photo: NYPIRG staff and volunteers call on the Wendy’s restaurant chain to stop using beef raised with antibiotics.
Promoting Open and Accountable Government

The incredible scandals and controversies that have rocked the New York State capitol in recent years provided an opportunity for NYPIRG to research and offer best ethics practices to guide policymakers in their debate over needed reforms. From campaign finance, to ethics regulation, to oversight of the lobbying industry, NYPIRG continued to be a leading voice in the call for ethics reform in Albany:

- We took on the political establishment in statewide media over its failure to tackle corruption in state government through a series of op-eds and news articles.

- NYPIRG continues to maintain its 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.

- NYPIRG released the latest in our series of “Albany Money Machine” reports, highlighting the number of campaign fundraisers held in Albany or by Albany leadership during the 2019 legislative session – 179 in total.

- Along with other good government groups, NYPIRG released a 50-state review of states’ ethics boards, which found that New York’s ethics watchdogs were among the very weakest in the nation when it comes to their public accountability and their independence. It also highlighted that the New York State Joint Commission on Public Ethics (JCOPE) and the Legislative Ethics Commission (LEC) fail to follow best practices in ethics oversight due to the inadequate structure of those organizations, and must be overhauled. The report also called for an ethics measure to be added to the state constitution.
Empowering Voters and Protecting Democracy

New York has long lagged behind other states in voter registration and voter participation rates. The importance of engaging New Yorkers in our democracy has never been more important. NYPIRG, in partnership with our affiliate organization, conducted a large-scale, non-partisan voter registration campaign in communities across New York State that registered over 20,000 voters.

NYPIRG has tirelessly advocated for reforms — to make it as easy as possible for New Yorkers to register and cast their vote, modernize our voting systems, and remove the influence of dark money in New York State politics. We released our 10 Common Sense Steps to Better Elections in New York State, and several of our recommendations were included in an important series of voter reforms enacted by the state. These measures are a step in the right direction to improving voter participation in New York State, and fostering open, accountable government. NYPIRG also released an analysis to highlight voter turnout and voter trends in New York City and New York State.

As part of the voting reforms package, a commission was established to implement a plan for a voluntary system of public financing for state offices. Amid concern that the commission was getting sidetracked on issues outside its scope, NYPIRG, along with other good government groups, sent a letter urging the commission to focus on the important task of implementing comprehensive campaign finance reform including public financing.

Victory! New York adopts a series of voter reforms:
- early voting
- primaries for federal and state elections combined
- voter preregistration for teens
- voter registration through state agencies
- voter registration portability within the state

Victory! Loophole for Limited Liability Corporation (LLC) closed, limiting dark money influence in elections

Victory! Over 20,000 Voters Registered
Fighting for Consumers

Higher Education Access and Affordability
Dramatic cuts in public funding, along with skyrocketing tuition and other costs associated with getting a college degree over the past several years have threatened access to affordable, quality higher education and contributed to rising student loan debt. NYPIRG engages students and the public on the costs associated with attending public and independent colleges, and offers policy solutions to help keep college affordable for all who wish to attend. Our efforts this year helped restore funding to opportunity and financial aid programs and safeguard access to open source textbooks and resources for students. Moreover, after years of organizing by NYPIRG and other community and immigrant rights groups, immigrant students won a landmark victory with the passage of the NY DREAM Act, allowing undocumented students to apply for and receive financial aid in order to attend public universities in New York.

Public Banking
NYPIRG is a member of the Public Bank NYC Coalition, a group of community organizations in support of the creation of a municipal public bank in New York City. The goals of the public bank are to help transform the local economy and fundamentally change the City’s approach to economic development. Specifically, the coalition aims to:

- make equitable investments that support the community in New York City as related to housing, public infrastructure, local businesses, and more
- foster community wealth-building and neighborhood led development
- expand high-quality, affordable financial services to low-income communities, immigrant communities, and communities of color
- promote transparency and accountability in municipal finance

Victory! New York State passes the NY DREAM Act

NYPIRG staff and students call for the creation of a public bank on the steps of New York City Hall.
Improving Mass Transit Access and Affordability

For the past four decades, the NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign has been a leader in the fight for safe, affordable, and reliable mass transit in New York City. Our reports, media outreach, advocacy, and public education efforts highlighted the need for a greater investment in transit infrastructure, and for better and more reliable service for New York City’s bus and subway riders. This past year, the Campaign engaged riders on key transit issues:

**Subway Service and Infrastructure**
- providing testimony regarding the Fiscal Year 2018-2019/2019-2020 Executive Transportation Budget proposal, focusing on the need for increased and new revenue streams
- helping to convene the Fix The Subway coalition, a diverse group of grassroots organizations dedicated to winning congestion pricing to fund critical transit repairs
- organizing and facilitating outreach, public forums, and educational events in New York City’s five boroughs to educate and engage the public about the benefits of congestion pricing

**Bus Service Improvements**
- continuing our work as a key member of the Bus Turnaround Coalition, including meeting regularly with the coalition to strategize organizing tactics, producing recommendations for city and state transit agencies to modernize and improve New York City’s bus system, and garnering press coverage of our work
- releasing our annual Pokey and Schleppie 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

**Access-A-Ride**
- working alongside the Access-A-Ride Reform Group Coalition (AAR) to win several key reforms including: continuation of AAR’s successful on-demand e-hail pilot project; creation of the MTA’s myAAR app and scheduling website; and continued modernization of AAR’s dispatching and scheduling technology

Victory! New York City commits to a set of bus service improvements like expansion of dedicated bus lanes and enforcement to keep lanes clear

Victory! New York includes congestion pricing in the 2019 state budget to create a long-term, sustainable source of revenue for the city’s ailing subway system

Straphangers Campaign Director Jaqi Cohen unveils the Pokey and Schleppie “awards” for slow and unreliable bus service. (Photo credit Clayton Guse / New York Daily News)
Financial Overview and Contact Information

The following is an overview of NYPIRG's income and expenses for the fiscal year ending August 31, 2019.

Board of Directors
Jay Halfon, President
Lisa Howard, Treasurer
Chris Meyer, Director
Neysa Pranger, Director
Camille Rivera, Director

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