



2024 Annual Report

NYPIRG

50

**YEARS OF
VICTORIES**

New York Public Interest Research Group Fund

From Our Executive Director

In our milestone 50th(!) year, we are happy to report that NYPIRG has continued to effectively educate, engage, and organize New Yorkers on important and timely issues including climate change, clean drinking water, solid waste, voter and civic engagement, consumer protection, mass transit, public health, and government accountability.

Our work this year led to two landmark victories that NYPIRG championed – the creation of the New York Climate Superfund program and implementation of Congestion Pricing in New York City. These two programs will have a meaningful and lasting impact for New Yorkers and the environment.

While we are making progress at the state level, the story is different at the federal level. New Yorkers are experiencing unprecedented attacks on vital environmental protections, consumer and student rights, and public health programs, and well as threats that challenge our democracy and civil liberties.

To combat these challenges, our public education and student and community engagement efforts in the coming year will be more important than ever.

We will continue our tireless work to:

- *support efforts to combat the climate crisis and hold corporate polluters accountable;*
- *reduce plastic waste and increase recycling;*
- *champion affordable mass transit;*
- *protect consumer rights and public health;*
- *promote open government, increase voter engagement, and protect democracy; and*
- *train the next generation of civic leaders.*

I am honored to take the reins as NYPIRG's eighth Executive Director and am thrilled to continue our important work to protect the public interest in New York State. I'd also like to thank our outgoing Executive Director Blair Horner, who has transitioned to a new role as NYPIRG's Senior Policy Advisor.

Our work would not be possible without the community of staff, volunteers, coalition partners, and supporters. To all of you, I extend my thanks and my gratitude, and I look forward to our work together.

--Megan Ahearn

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 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



Victory! *New York to establish a Climate Superfund program, holding corporate polluters responsible for their role in the climate crisis and shifting the cost burden for climate mitigation away from taxpayers.*

Victory! *New York's bans the use of carbon dioxide drilling for natural gas or oil resources.*

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

Victory! *Two new laws begin to go into effect in New York City that will significantly reduce climate pollution. Local Law 154 mandates all-electric new buildings in New York City. Local Law 97 requires that large buildings reduce their greenhouse gas emissions 40% by 2030 and 80% by 2050.*

NYPIRG'S Fossil-Free Future Campaign endeavors to make New York State a national and global leader in the fight to combat the devastating effects of climate change.

Climate change is the greatest environmental threat facing the planet. The last nine years have been the hottest on record, with 2024 was the hottest year in human recorded history. New York saw a continuation of worsening weather such as intense storms, floods, heat waves, drought-fueled wildfires, tornados, and more – and the staggering costs from these impacts are mounting. Since 1980, New York has been hit with 95 weather disaster events with losses exceeding \$1 billion each. Cumutively, that's hundreds of billions of dollars and, alarmingly, the frequency of severe events – from droughts, to floods, severe freezes, winter storms, and tropical cyclones – is accelerating.

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.

Fossil Free Future Highlights

- Mobilized thousands of students and advocates to participate in the historic March to End Fossil Fuels in September, joining protest marches around the globe for climate action by world leaders.
- Released [On the Backs of New York City Taxpayers: The Extreme Costs of Climate Change](#), a report highlighting the extreme financial cost of climate change to New Yorkers. Our analysis found that New York City taxpayers were heavily burdened by \$2.2 billion in climate costs in 2023, or \$300 per household, with estimated future costs of \$162.9 billion, or \$50,906 per household.
- In partnership with the New York Renews Coalition, released a follow-up report, [On the Backs of New York State Households: The Extreme Costs of Climate Change Impacts Families in Every Region of the State](#). The report included a region-by-region analysis of the statewide taxpayer tally per household.
- Produced and released a [Make Polluters Pay](#) video to highlight the staggering costs of the climate crisis on New Yorkers and call for the creation of a Climate Superfund Program.
- Organized and participated in dozens of media events and rallies, and town halls across the state that brought together students, residents, and community groups in support of pro-climate policies.
- Conducted over 25,000 one-on-one conversations in person and on the phone with New Yorkers across the state about climate pollution and climate policies in New York State.



Decarbonizing New York



Buildings generate up to 60% of New York's greenhouse gas emissions. 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 State. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions from buildings would combat the climate crisis by slashing fossil fuel use, creating clean energy jobs, and preventing gas explosions, fires; and more deadly local air pollution. This year, we:

- Turned out New Yorkers in force to rallies, media events, and actions in New York City and Albany, engaging a swell of grassroots support from individuals, organizations, and civic leaders.
- Watchdogged the implementation of the new All-Electric Buildings Act, requiring new building construction in New York State be electric.
- Worked to ensure that the implementation of Local Law 97 in New York City – an ambitious new law to reduce the emissions produced by the city's largest buildings 40 percent by 2030 and to achieve net zero by 2050 – moved forward and that efforts to weaken the law were thwarted.
- Built community support for policies that would make it easier and cheaper for homeowners to make their homes energy efficient, safe, and to switch their fossil fuel boilers to non-polluting technology like heat pumps upon the death of the fossil fuel boiler. The policy, dubbed Bucks for Boilers, was released at a news conference where we shared a Switchbox analysis on the policy alongside coalition partners and community leaders.

Above: NYPIRG and coalition partners rally in Albany (top photo) and New York City (bottom photo) in support of policies to reduce building emissions and lower utility bills.

Previous Page: NYPIRG staff and volunteers host a Make Polluters Pay news conference in New York City (top), rally in Albany for pro-climate policies (middle), and participate in a Climate Justice Town Hall in New York City (bottom).

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 and public health. In New York State, the solid waste crisis is at a critical level, and local recycling programs are struggling.

This past year, NYPIRG advanced our efforts to raise awareness and support for updating New York’s highly successful container deposit redemption program, known as the Bottle Bill. We also supported efforts that would reduce plastic in packaging to help reduce the amount of plastic waste that is created. In coalition we:

- [Released a listing of over 1,000 local charities](#) that benefit from New York’s container recycling law, and [highlighted struggling redemption centers](#).
- Organized two days of action in February and May 2024 in Albany that brought together activists from across the state for events, educational briefings, and meetings with stakeholders on recycling and solid waste policies.
- Sent a letter signed by over 300 groups to Governor Hochul in support of strengthening and modernizing the state’s bottle return policies, and another letter encouraging increased support to redemption centers and other struggling

businesses that assist with beverage container recycling.

- conducted [community cleanups and litter surveys at 16 parks and beaches throughout New York State](#). Of the more than 14,000 pieces of trash collected, plastic trash outnumbered other materials by a two to one margin. Moreover, over 60% of the bottles that were collected did not have a deposit and were not eligible for redemption. The results of the survey were released during a news conference in Albany to highlight the issue of plastic waste and the need to update our recycling laws.

Safeguarding Drinking Water

[Victory! \\$500 million for upgrading drinking water infrastructure.](#)

Eight 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 the 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.

Photo: NYPIRG staff and volunteers conduct a litter survey and clean-up in Flushing Meadows Corona Park.

Empowering Voters and Protecting Democracy



Victory! *More than 10,000 New Yorkers registered to vote.*

Victory! *Additional drop-off locations for absentee ballots are established.*

Victory! *Funding for New York State's Board of Elections is increased to replace and upgrade electronic polling equipment.*

It has been well-established that the key to future voter participation is engagement early in adulthood. NYPIRG's New Voter Engagement Project: recruits and train students across the state through experiential learning to register and mobilize their peers to vote; conducts public education efforts about voter policies being considered at the local and national level; and fosters lifelong voting and civic participation habits among young voters. Highlights and accomplishments from our work this year include:

- Conducted and published a review of New York colleges to identify which ones had polling sites on or adjacent to the campus. The review

highlighted more than two dozen colleges with dorms that did not have a polling site on campus or nearby and made recommendations to the State Board of Elections to further examine the issue.

- Hosted a voter mobilization strategy session with community partners to plan for a large-scale voter mobilization effort for the November 2024 election.
- Conducted a series of "Idea Generation" workshops to identify community funding needs and assisted thousands of New Yorkers in casting votes during New York City's 2024 Citywide Participatory Budget process.
- In partnership with our affiliate organization, registered over 10,000 students and other New Yorkers to vote through in-person student and community non-partisan voter registration drives – and turned out thousands of New Yorkers to the polls on Election Day.
- Hosted voter registration events across the state for the 12th Annual National Voter Registration Day.
- Developed and shared voter resources and fact sheets on voting rights, how to check your voter registration status and poll site information, a step-by-step guide to making a voting plan, an early voting guide, and an Absentee Voting 101 guide.

Photo: NYPIRG hosts an "Idea Generation" workshop for the 2024 Citywide Participatory Budget process.

Promoting Open and Accountable Government



Victory! Successfully beat back efforts to weaken the state's voluntary system of public financing

NYPIRG continued to be a leading voice in the call for ethics reform in Albany, and a tenacious watchdog of state government actions, policies, and priorities. The 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 debates 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.

Highlights from our work this year:

- Released [Tale of the Tape: NYPIRG's 2024 Legislative Review](#), our annual review of the New York State Legislative session.
- Along with other New York transparency advocates, sent a Sunshine Week letter calling for the strengthening New York's Freedom of Information Law (FOIL).
- Continued shining a light on government practices via dozens of news articles and op-eds.
- 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.
- Maintained and updated our "[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.

Protecting Consumers and Public Health

Victory! *Credit reporting agencies are prohibited from putting medical debt on credit reports.*

Victory! *New protections are established for New Yorkers for excessive health care costs. New York modernized the Hospital Financial Assistance (HFA) program so that moving forward, no patient can be denied emergency or medically necessary care if they have an unpaid medical bill. There are also new provisions that protect low- and moderate-income New Yorkers.*

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.

Throughout the year, we hosted a series of workshops about medical debt across the state, participated in media events and rallies in support of health care access for all, and worked to update the state's antiquated wrongful death laws.

We won an important consumer protection and public health victory this year when a new law was established prohibiting credit reporting agencies from putting medical debt on credit reports. We participated in a bill signing event with Governor Kathy Hochul where NYPIRG activist Anthony Calafiura spoke about his experience with medical debt.

The Case for a Public Bank

NYPIRG is a member of Public Bank NYC, a coalition of more than 40 organizations in New York 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 news events, virtual rallies, social media action days, stakeholder meetings, and educational workshops to raise awareness and support for public banking.

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, and more. For many, New York's Small Claims Court – the original "People's Court" – is the place for them to seek justice. In partnership with our affiliate, over 100 NYPIRG counselors across the state provided procedural information to consumers via our [Small Claims Court Action Centers](#). This year, our Action Center counselors assisted over 600 callers, increased outreach to community organizations, and promoted our [Spanish Language Small Claims Court Action Center page](#). We also released [Small Claims, Small Changes](#), a report highlighting the experience of litigants who participated in cases in the City of Albany Small Claims Court in 2021 and making recommendations to improve the Small Claims Court system as a whole.

Ensuring Access to Quality and Affordable Public Higher Education



full-time professors, and increased financial aid for college students. Our efforts resulted in an important financial aid victory for college students and their families with increased income eligibility and increased minimum awards for the Tuition Assistance Program.

Photo: NYPIRG activists rally at City Hall in support of increased funding for public higher education.

Victory! *Significant improvements to the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) – For the first time in decades, the state increased the income eligibility cap to \$125,000 and increased the size of the minimum award from \$500 to \$1,000 – essentially updating those amounts to cover the loss in purchasing power due to inflation.*

For over a decade, rising tuition and other costs associated with getting a college degree have made college affordability a challenge for students and their families. At the same time, state aid for higher education has been mostly flat and small improvements to financial aid have not closed the divide. Persistently high interest rates and rising costs for things like textbooks, housing, childcare, food, and transit threaten college accessibility for too many, particularly students from low- to middle-income families.

NYPIRG's workshops, events and community engagement centered around increasing public support for fully funded public higher education, an increase in

Improving Mass Transit Access and Affordability



Victory! *Congestion pricing program implemented in New York City.*

Victory! *NYC Fair Fares program expanded to increase the eligibility threshold from 100% to 120% of the federal poverty level.*

Since the 1970s, 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.

This year, the Straphangers Campaign celebrated a long-fought victory to implement Congestion Pricing in New York City, the culmination of years of organizing efforts. We also fought for improvements to bus service and transit infrastructure, successfully pushed for an expansion of the Fair Fares discount transit program, and engaged students and other riders in support of

local transit projects across the city. Our work this year included:

- Engaging with community members and organizations to win broad support for bus lanes and busway implementation.
- Organizing student riders around the local New York City Bus Network Redesigns: recently completed in the Bronx, and underway in Queens and Brooklyn.
- Testifying at MTA Board meetings and public hearings throughout the year in support of transit improvements and affordability.

Photo: NYPIRG activist rally for transit improvements in Queens.

Donald K. Ross Future Leaders Program



Donald K. Ross, NYPIRG's first Executive Director, passed away on May 14, 2022. To honor his legacy, NYPIRG launched the [Donald K. Ross Future Leaders Program](#), a unique internship program to help train the next generation of activists. Training future leaders to become effective advocates and agents of change in the public interest was central to the mission of Donald's life's work.

NYPIRG's inaugural class of DKRFLP interns worked on a range of policy issues including health care access and affordability, consumer justice, climate change, higher education, voting rights and good government. They participated in a wide array of experiences – drafting bill memos and tracking legislation, meeting with legislators and staff, participating in rallies and events at the State Capitol, speaking at news conferences and earning media attention, and more. Interns were paired with a NYPIRG staff mentor they were assigned to with expertise in their particular issue area and participated in workshops and lectures from NYPIRG expert staff and other advocates, media experts, and legislative staff.

50th Anniversary Celebration

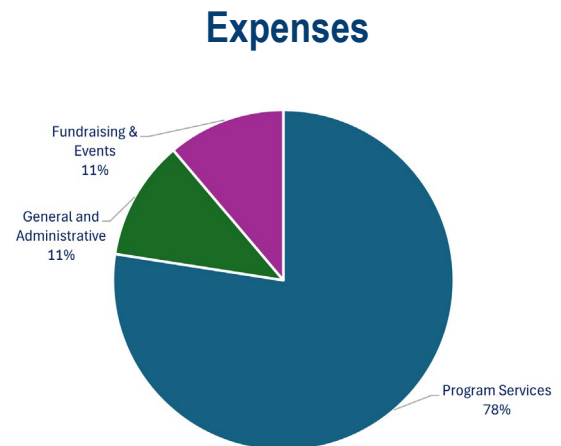
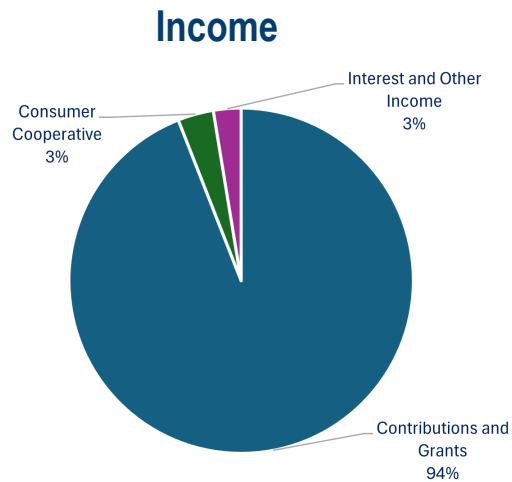


NYPIRG IS 50 YEARS OLD! That is an incredible testament to the dedication, hard work, and luck that has allowed us to meet the half-century mark. It is quite a milestone – which we marked with the NYPIRG 50th Anniversary Celebration.

The event celebrated NYPIRG's decades of tireless work for the public interest, brought together NYPIRG alumni, activists, and community leaders and honored our 2023 Changemaker Award recipients – including renowned author and activist Jane Fonda.

Financial Overview and Contact Information

The following is an overview of NYPIRG's income and expenses for the fiscal year ending August 31, 2024.



Board of Directors

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

Executive Director

Megan Ahearn

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