



WASHINGTON
PHYSICIANS
FOR SOCIAL
RESPONSIBILITY

SUMMER 2020 NEWSLETTER

NEWS, EVENTS & DISPATCHES FROM WPSR



Mark R. Vossler, MD
WPSR President

Letter from the President

We remain in the midst of a jarring social upheaval driven by the COVID19 pandemic. Not only does it threaten our physical health but also strains our social structures, takes a large emotional toll, and threatens to impoverish the most vulnerable among us. For some of us, it has been very personal. Practicing medicine during this crisis has been frightening, challenging, and emotionally draining on one hand, but very rewarding on another. I've seen colleagues fall ill and even some succumb to the virus.

Yet I've seen courage, determination, and nothing short of clinical heroism as well. The fear of the burden of disease outstripping our capacity to care for the ill calls to mind the inadequacy of the hospitals in Hiroshima and Nagasaki after the nuclear attacks. It also reminds us of how underprepared we are for the devastation of climate-induced disaster and disease.

In the midst of one crisis, another long-simmering crisis of structural racism and violence comes to a boil with yet another instance of unwarranted excessive force on the part of a police officer resulting in the death of an African American. It should surprise no one that the response to this institutionalized violence has been mass protests. Given the growing deep divisions in our society, it also should be no surprise that some of those protests have been marred by violence. We, at WPSR, join PSR and our fellow chapters across the nation in calling for "PSR members, who are devoted to fighting climate change and eliminating the threat posed by nuclear weapons, to be every bit as active in dismantling institutional racism in their communities."

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Letter from WPSR President, Mark R. Vossler, MD

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Reports from each of our programs, elsewhere in this newsletter, delve into the implications of the pandemic for all the issues that we work on. This crisis has confirmed for us that we are indeed focused on the most important social issues that impact human health. We are learning valuable lessons that we will carry forward in our work.

With all the current turmoil, it is natural that some of you would be wondering about the health of WPSR. I am happy to report that we remain strong, and our advocacy programs continue to have impact. Thanks to your generous contributions our organization remains financially strong and our program work fully supported. Our annual dinner has been our biggest source of revenue for the past five years and we were quite concerned about the financial implications of having to cancel the event at the last minute. Fortunately, you, our members and supporters, came through quite generously and our operating revenue and expenses are on budget for the year to date. Our dinner is, of course, more than a fundraiser. I personally missed the social aspects of this event. I really would have liked to chat with folks I haven't seen in a while. I really would have liked to introduce Max to you personally. I really would have liked to have another chance to hear our keynote speaker. You can look forward to some smaller WPSR sponsored gatherings as well as an annual dinner every year once the need for physical distancing is past.

While we always hope our members stay with us forever, it is natural for staff and board members to change over time. It is with both gratitude and sadness that I inform you that Dr. Bruce Amundson has announced his retirement from both the Nuclear Weapons Taskforce and from the WPSR board. Bruce nearly single-handedly pulled our chapter back from the brink of dissolution several years ago and has been a mentor and role model to me. As you read on, you'll find a wonderful article in this newsletter from Gerri Haynes, thanking Bruce for his myriad and outsize contributions to WPSR over the years, as he moves on to much-deserved rest and relaxation. We stand on the shoulders of giants here, folks. I can assure you, base on my discussions with Bruce, that he would not have stepped down until he felt that our chapter was in excellent shape for the long run and could continue our work and impact.

Fortunately, as we bid farewell to Bruce, we are also welcoming two outstanding people and professionals - Dr. Mariamee "Maria" Gonzalez and Dr. Joseph "Joe" Berkson - to the WPSR Board of Directors. Maria is the Associate Chair of the Clinical Mental Health Counseling program and Coordinator of the Multicultural Concentration at Antioch University. She has 18 years of experience practicing clinical mental health counseling and is a long time social justice advocate. Joe is a family physician who, upon retirement from Kaiser Permanente, agreed to co-chair our Nuclear Weapons Abolition Task Force, and has now also joined our Board of Directors. Joe has a long history of advocacy for peace and abolition of nuclear weapons.

Later in this newsletter, you will see exciting news about our expanding program staff. We are thrilled to have Tesia Wood join us as Economic Inequity Program Organizer and Nick Manning as the Climate and Health Program Organizer. Please extend a warm welcome to both of them. Nick steps into some pretty big shoes. Sarah Cornett who served as Climate Program Organizer and Manager for three years made critical contributions to our work on climate. She was responsible for maximizing the effectiveness of our volunteers and forming alliances with partners in our coalitions in the climate movement. We are extremely grateful for all that she has done.

You have likely noted in our recent communications that, across all our programs, we are working to respond to the myriad crises that the COVID19 has posed both for our health care professional members, and for the issues we work on. Our tenacious work on the climate crisis, economic inequity, and the threat of nuclear weapons continues apace, and as you read on, you'll learn more about how we are addressing these threats to public health through tireless advocacy and education, and how you can engage in and support our efforts.

With Gratitude and in Peace,
Mark R. Vossler, MD President



PLEASE SUPPORT US!

Being a member of WPSR means you are supporting one of the most effective organizations working to combat the gravest threats to human health.

Our work on Nuclear Weapons abolition, the climate crisis, and economic inequity is making Washington a healthier, safer, and more sustainable place for all.

Please join us by becoming a member or renewing your membership. Its easy!



DONATE ONLINE WITH YOUR CREDIT CARD
AT [WPSR.ORG/SUPPORT](https://wpsr.org/support)



SEND A CHECK, IN AN ENVELOPE, JUST LIKE
IN THE GOOD OLD DAYS



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DONATIONS OF STOCK

FIVE FACTS ABOUT WPSR MEMBERSHIP

- ANYONE CAN BE A WPSR MEMBER!
- CURRENT STUDENTS JOIN FOR FREE!
- MEMBERSHIP STARTS AS LOW AS \$35/YEAR!
- IT'S EASY TO BECOME A MONTHLY OR QUARTERLY DONOR!
- YOUR DONATION IS 100% TAX DEDUCTIBLE!

**TO DONATE OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP
VISIT [WPSR.ORG/SUPPORT](https://wpsr.org/support)
OR CALL 206.547.2630**

WPSR's Health Professional Petition for Social Responsibility During COVID-19: An Open Letter

WPSR is sponsoring a petition for WA state health professionals calling for an equitable response and recovery to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the protection of the most vulnerable. We aim to gather 1000 signatures to be delivered to the WA Congressional Delegation and members of the State House and Senate. As a member, you can help us amplify the demands and voices of health and medical professionals during this critical time by signing and sharing this petition, calling on Washington Members of Congress and State Legislators to serve the people and ensure that the state's response to COVID-19 upholds the following principles:

HEALTH IS THE TOP PRIORITY, FOR ALL PEOPLE, WITH NO EXCEPTIONS

- Provide free and accessible COVID-19 testing, treatment and care for all, regardless of immigration or insurance status.
- Keep essential workers safe during the COVID-19 crisis. Enhance protections for all workers on the frontlines - including low-wage workers and undocumented immigrants
- Increase investments in public health departments.

PROVIDE ECONOMIC RELIEF DIRECTLY TO THE PEOPLE

- Put money directly in the hands of those in need through progressive cash assistance.
- Protect public investments and the social safety net.
- Reform regressive tax codes to ensure sustainable and equitable state funding streams.

RESCUE WORKERS AND COMMUNITIES, NOT CORPORATE EXECUTIVES

- Ensure environmental protections and standards are maintained
- Resist massive, “no strings attached” fossil fuel company bailouts and use stimulus money to support a transition away from fossil fuels and towards clean energy.
- Mandate worker protections with any relief and stimulus directed towards coal, oil, and gas companies.
- Dollars for relief should prioritize vulnerable communities and represent a shift away from military spending to spending for the public good.

MAKE A DOWN PAYMENT ON A REGENERATIVE ECONOMY, & PREVENT FUTURE CRISES

- Shift federal funding for unneeded nuclear weapons development and modernization to the immediate and needs of communities and local economies.
- Increase federal aid to state and local governments throughout the economic recession to help spur local economies and prevent harmful budget cuts.
- Incorporate long term energy transition goals into relief and stimulus packages, including reduction requirements for carbon pollution

Please add your name and share this petition at
wpsr.org/covid19-action

WPSR Welcomes Two New Board Members



MARIAIMEE GONZALEZ, Ph.D, LPC | BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mariaimee “Maria” Gonzalez, Ph.D., LPC, is an Associate Chair of the Clinical Mental Health Counseling program and Coordinator of the Multicultural Concentration at Antioch University Seattle and has been committed to multicultural, social justice and advocacy counseling through several facets of her life and work. For over 18 years, she has been practicing as a professional clinical mental health counselor, and an advocate for legislation and social policy for underserved communities. For the past 15 years, she has taught globally and has been active in presenting on social justice issues at a variety of national and international conferences, facilitating workshops on social issues, and engaging in ongoing community service. She is currently the president for the state board of the American Counseling Association of Washington.



JOSEPH BERKSON, MD | BOARD OF DIRECTORS

After a long career in Family Practice at Group Health (then Kaiser Permanente), Joe became actively involved in WPSR. He has been an antinuclear weapons advocate since living through the cold war, and competing in his senior year in high school with the debate team proposition: “There should be an internationally verifiable test ban treaty.” Going through medical school, Joe was active in the progressive Student Health Organization, protesting the war in Vietnam. As a young physician, he joined WPSR in 1985 and has been a member since then. Now retired with more time available, Joe joined the Nuclear Weapons Abolition Task Force in 2018, and was honored to be asked to co-chair the task force in 2019, leading WPSR’s efforts to lobby members of congress along with WPSR members, and helping to build the largest anti-nuclear coalition of its kind in the U.S.

YOU CAN BE A PART OF THE WPSR TEAM TOO!

WPSR works for the health and peace of all Washingtonians. When you become a WPSR member, you invest in your own health and well-being, and the well-being of your family, neighbors and community. Join us, and become a member or renew today by visiting

WWW.WPSR.ORG/SUPPORT

New Faces on the WPSR Staff Team

Please join us in welcome our newest team members!



TESIA WOOD, MA | ECONOMIC INEQUITY ORGANIZER

Operations and Economic Inequity Program Coordinator Tesia Wood stewards WPSR's Economic Inequity and Health program and supports WPSR's daily administrative operations. She has a background in political economy and holds a Master's in Health Policy and Equity from York University, and a B.A. in Anthropology from McGill University.

Prior to joining WPSR, Tesia worked on a health policy research team based at York University in Toronto and contributed to research projects on the social determinants of health, community-based health services, and issues of inequity in long term care and aging policy.



NICK MANNING, MPA | CLIMATE & HEALTH ORGANIZER

A Seattle native, Nick is the newest member of the WPSR staff team. He earned his B.A. in Environmental Policy from Colby College in 2016, and has worked in Washington DC and Portland, ME on environmental initiatives in both the private and nonprofit sectors.

Nick comes to WPSR from his most recent role with The Center for Environmental Law & Policy (CELP) Growing up in Seattle, Nick's favorite activities included hiking and camping in the summer around Washington's alpine lakes, and skiing in the winter. You can find him around town playing frisbee or music in city leagues or at the occasional coffee house on Capitol Hill. To contact Nick, email him at nick@wpsr.org.

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The Implications of COVID for Climate and Health

Ken Lans, MD, MBA

Past-President, Co-Chair, Climate & Health Task Force

As an organization built around health professionals, we at WPSR are aware that the attention of our community currently needs to focus on the COVID19 pandemic. We are also mindful of the challenges that society will face when we finally come out on the other side of this crisis. Some challenges will be new, but many will be those we were already grappling with. And some of those - like the climate crisis - take on increased urgency, needing to be addressed in light of what the pandemic has wrought, exposed, and taught us.

While the pandemic remains front and center, we are also aware that we can't afford to leave a void that those opposed to urgent action on climate are sure to try to fill. We've already heard some elected officials in Congress claiming, without evidence, that the current economic meltdown is akin to what will happen if any sort of green new deal is enacted. We've also seen the rollback of critical environmental regulations — ones that broadly and profoundly impact health — in the midst of the pandemic. The key for WPSR, moving forward, is to be sensitive to current priorities, and discern how -- and also when -- to best communicate and advocate on behalf of our climate mission.

The changed landscape presents many challenges, but also myriad opportunities. People's eyes have been opened to the value of science, the importance of crisis preparedness, the fragility of our fossil-fuel-centric economy, the inefficiencies and inequities of our current health care system, and the unacceptable health disparities that exist in our society. Many now have a sense of the possibility and desirability of cleaner, less polluted skies, and recognize that many of the preconditions that have raised the death rate from COVID-19 are made worse by fossil fuel-driven air pollution.

What we pointed out in a letter to members in April, remains true: studies continue to reveal that race, income, and exposure to fossil fuel pollution are all major risk factors for dying from COVID19. People of color, low-income people, and those who can't work from home are bearing the brunt of this crisis -- just as climate change disproportionately threatens these same communities. Mustafa Santiago Ali, who we missed hearing from as keynote speaker for our annual dinner, speaks eloquently to how the pandemic disproportionately harms vulnerable populations in this important, brief video. We hope to invite him back to join us in the near future for a discussion on the pressing issue of climate justice.

As our policymakers and communities respond to this crisis, it is more important than ever to enact just policies that address decades of environmental injustice, racism, and economic disparity. This crisis has opened up an opportunity to build a more resilient and equitable society and a stronger clean energy economy. Recovery from the COVID19 crisis must not be a reversion back to the status quo of fossil fuel subsidies, dependency, and pollution. Instead, we must continue to push for a transition to a safe, healthy, and equitable clean energy future that also creates sustainable, living-wage jobs.

Now, as many WPSR health care professionals are working to directly care for COVID-19 patients, our Climate & Health Task Force is focused on standing with those who have been most impacted by this public health crisis and helping to ensure that the voices of those most affected are heard by our local, state and federal elected officials.

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WPSR WANTS YOU!

WPSR 's board of directors is a group of healthcare and other professionals fiercely committed to protecting public health from the greatest threats of our time. We are looking for new board members who represent diverse backgrounds and communities across Washington. To learn more, please contact us or visit wpsr.org/joinboard

The Implications of COVID for Climate and Health

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We are working with our coalition partners: Power Past Fracked Gas, Stand Up To Oil, and the Climate Alliance for Jobs & Clean Energy, to push hard for a “just recovery.” As WPSR President Mark Vossler said in a Climate Alliance press release, “since the current pandemic is primarily a crisis of human health, a just recovery must promote health and safety of all people. Since economic inequity was driving worsening health outcomes prior to this crisis, we must, as a society, do everything in our power to narrow the economic gap and ensure that low-income workers and communities of color do not once again bear a disproportionate burden in what is a global problem.”

WPSR is continuing its tenacious fight against the scourge of fossil-fuels in our state. We continue to advocate for 2020 Washington-state climate priorities including the adoption of zero-emission vehicle and low-carbon fuel standards, as well as aggressive - and much needed - limits on climate pollution. And we are fighting dangerous, costly, and health-harming new fossil fuel infrastructure as a co-litigant in lawsuits against the liquified fracked gas facility at the Port of Tacoma, and the world’s largest methanol facility proposed for the Port of Kalama. We are working with our sister PSR chapter in Oregon to offer virtual climate advocacy trainings for health professionals - even during the pandemic, to grow our cadre of climate and health advocates across the region.

These efforts can only be successful to the extent that you - our health professional members and supporters - are engaged in this work (sign up here for regular climate updates or to get more involved). Your direct involvement and financial support of this work are critical, and we hope you stand with us, as we stand firm against the threats to our climate, and our health.

A Fond Farewell to Sarah Cornett



WPSR shares its heartfelt thanks and gratitude to Sarah Cornett as she leaves our staff after nearly 3 years as WPSR’s Climate & Health Program Manager extraordinaire. Sarah has been accepted at Berkeley’s top-ranked Public Policy Graduate program and is moving back to California to spend time with her family over the summer before she starts. There are not enough words to express what a remarkable job Sarah has done and what a strong impact she has had, not just at WPSR, but throughout the climate community in our state.

Sarah’s abilities to lead, to message, to find and encourage people to call, write letters, gives speeches and talks, and testify on bills and legislation have played a crucial role in elevating WPSR’s climate visibility, effectiveness, and influence. We wish Sarah all the best at Berkeley, and are certain she’s destined for great things and that we’ll be seeing her name and hearing about her accomplishments in the future. Please join us in thanking Sarah and wishing her well.

Sarah can be reached at sarahmcorbett@gmail.com.

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Honoring Dr. Bruce Amundson



by Gerri Haynes

Dear Members and Supporters of Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility,

The Board and Officers of Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility invite you to join us in expressing our deep gratitude to Dr. Bruce Amundson. Bruce has served our chapter for decades including both as a board member and President. The Washington Chapter of Physicians for Social Responsibility has been, and continues to be, one of the most active and vital chapters in the national Physicians for Social Responsibility organization.

When Bruce accepted the role of President of WPSR in 2014, our chapter was in need of a revitalized purpose and renewed activism by our members. Through heroic effort and countless hours working with staff, contacting members, recruiting partners, and securing financial support, Bruce succeeded in bringing our chapter back to life, with renewed energy for its critical role in the health-based advocacy community. When Bruce accepted the role as President of WPSR in 2014, the chapter was threatened with dissolution.

Under Bruce's leadership, WPSR's membership has grown exponentially, with nearly 1000 dedicated supporters - like you - across and beyond Washington State. The organization rapidly went from having no paid staff to a team of four that today puts WPSR among the most developed and effective PSR chapters in the country. Bruce initiated our Economic Inequity Program in 2014, and re-instituted WPSR's annual dinner as a core fundraising vehicle for the organization. The success of the annual dinners has been fundamental to WPSR's strong financial position, and is the accomplishment that Bruce has been most proud of in his role as WPSR's "Fundraiser-in-Chief."

Bruce set a new and important strategic direction for WPSR's Nuclear Weapons Abolition Program, with the goal to create a state-wide anti-nuclear movement by enlisting organizations into a formal coalition. He initiated the effort to bring together the Washington Against Nuclear Weapons Coalition (WANW) which has emerged as the largest anti-nuclear coalition in the US. As this movement has grown, the coalition's work and underlying model have influenced national PSR's work, and continue to wield influence on Congress in terms of outdated and dangerous Cold War policies.

Today, WPSR has three robust programs, each staffed with a talented full-time organizer, and WPSR is the recognized leader in Washington when it comes to bringing the health voice to bear on the most critical public health issues of our time. Now, as Bruce is retiring from the WPSR Board, we look forward to continuing his work, to growing our membership, and to expanding the essential role of health professionals in seeking solutions to the gravest problems confronting our world. We are grateful to Bruce for his tireless work and innumerable contributions that have made WPSR so effective, so respected, and poised for continued success. As we carry on, we ask that you join us in expressing our profound appreciation to Bruce for his efforts, for his wisdom, and for his dedication. Please help WPSR honor Bruce by joining us in our commitment to support his legacy, by continuing - or renewing - your support of WPSR, and by standing with us as we work to address the greatest threats to human health and survival: nuclear weapons, economic inequity, and the climate crisis.

Please consider honoring Dr. Bruce Amundson by becoming a member of WPSR's Legacy Circle. Bruce founded the Legacy Circle, a group of WPSR's most dedicated supporters who have made a commitment to support WPSR in their estate plans.

To learn more, please contact us or visit wpsr.org/legacy.

COVID-19 and Policy Opportunities for Economic Equity

by Dr. Stephen Bezruchka

Co-chair, WPSR Economic Inequity & Health Program

The COVID19 pandemic has brought us unparalleled opportunities to reform society in ways that support public health, sustainability, and economic vitality. We are seeing in brutally stark ways how the growing wealth gap is evidence of structural violence long wrought on the same populations now suffering disproportionately from COVID19. And there is no more stark evidence of our country's epidemic of structural violence than the recent deaths of George Floyd and so many other people of color at the hands of a racist and over-militarized police.

What should the response to structural violence be? What will we do once the infectious threat has minimized? We must see it as a stepping stone to a society without the "greed is good" mentality and the endless pursuit of profit over human health.

We are seeing early signs of what our post-pandemic communities might look like. At the same time as people are being quarantined, stay-at-home orders are also resulting in closer connections between friends, families, and neighbors. There is an impetus to reduce, re-use, and redistribute limited resources. Calls have quickly grown to appropriately compensate people who do dangerous work in critical jobs yet remain chronically underpaid. And yet, in this moment of crisis, there are still many unseized opportunities: to provide the unemployed with opportunities to do the desperately needed work of testing and contact tracing, to repair our degraded infrastructure; to undo the damage done to those who have been harmed over eons, to end the concentration of wealth through new laws and policies that foster equity, and to promote equitable and just societies, flourishing democratic systems, and healthy communities and economies.

WPSR is dedicated to addressing the inequitable distribution of resources as an underlying major threat to human health. Like the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and dependence on climate-destroying fossil fuels, growing inequality is simply not good for us, and it has never been clearer that it is subjecting entire populations - low-income households and communities of color - to suffer disproportionately from a pandemic whose costs and pains are not being suffered equally.



How is WPSR addressing this issue? We have hired our first-ever staff organizer dedicated to our Economic Inequity initiative, and have a team of graduate students working on robust inequality-focused policy analysis. We are rapidly growing our task force of health professionals who will guide and execute WPSR's economic inequity work. We are publishing OpEd's on progressive tax reform, and working with members of the top statewide coalitions addressing the growing wealth gap in our states.

Economic inequity did not start with the pandemic. But the pandemic has highlighted and exacerbated this pernicious issue in extreme ways. The sudden prominence of this challenge also presents us - health care professionals - with an opportunity and obligation to address inequity and its intimate relationship to health. We call on WPSR members and all health care professionals to join us in this work and to help make sure the lessons of the pandemic do not go to waste.

Dr. Bezruchka is a member of WPSR's Board of Directors, and Chair of the WPSR Economic Inequity & Health Task Force

JOIN WPSR'S ECONOMIC INEQUITY & HEALTH PROGRAM
FOR AN UPCOMING MEET-UP! VISIT [WPSR.ORG](https://wpsr.org) FOR DETAILS!

WANW Coalition Demands Nuclear Modernization Funding Be Diverted To Respond To The COVID-19 Crisis

by Carly Brook, WPSR Nuclear Weapons Abolition Program Organizer

As a global pandemic, COVID-19 is creating unprecedented healthcare challenges for all communities in Washington State. We encourage the public to take all responsible precautions in keeping themselves and others healthy during the outbreak. We also encourage people to support one another to help mitigate the worst and most immediate impacts of this virus through solidarity, care and mutual aid. We must also organize through the crisis to ensure a just recovery for those who are most vulnerable, and most affected.

COVID-19 carries a special importance to the nuclear disarmament movement because individuals and communities impacted by the research, development, testing, and production of nuclear weapons often have so many underlying factors which magnify their risks, including radioactive and toxic chemical exposures, air and water pollution, poverty, poor nutrition and institutionalized racism, etc. This can all provide the background for weakened immune systems of members of communities on the frontlines of the nuclear system: veterans and civilians exposed to radiation through above-ground nuclear testing, uranium miners, residents near abandoned mines and waste sites, and those who worked in nuclear production sites. These exposed populations are disproportionately from indigenous communities, communities of color, low-income, or rural communities, and often face significant barriers to receiving adequate health care.

Many frontline communities in WA State with nuclear-related healthcare issues have acute vulnerabilities to COVID-19 because radiation exposure compromises the immune system and the ability of the body to fight off viruses. Communities living downwind from the plutonium processing facility at Hanford as well as workers at the facility were exposed to radiation during the production phase of nuclear weapons. The legacy of Hanford on ancestral lands creates healthcare challenges for nations such as Yakama, Nez Perce, Umatilla and Wanapum.

Mining for uranium for nuclear weapons exposed communities like the Spokane Tribe. As Sovereignty Health Air Water Land (SHAWL) Society describes it: "our families on the Navajo and Spokane Reservation are at extremely high risk with limited to no access to basic PPE, medical support services and healthy food. There are symptomatic staff in both the local IHS clinic and HHS which provide support to disabled and patients with medical needs."

Also vulnerable are our local communities of Japanesehibakusha and Marshallese who suffer lasting health issues resulting from the exposure to radiation released during nuclear detonations in their homelands. We know that COVID-19 will have disproportionate impacts that highlight and exacerbate existing inequity in our state and country: the hardest hit will be communities of color, low-income communities and those who live paycheck-to-paycheck, those with suppressed immune systems and who already have a harder time accessing health care. We must put the needs of people first.

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WASHINGTON AGAINST NUCLEAR WEAPONS IS A
STATEWIDE COALITION OF OVER 50 ORGANIZATIONS
THAT AIMS TO PREVENT NUCLEAR WAR AND ABOLISH
NUCLEAR WEAPONS. TO LEARN MORE OR JOIN, VISIT:

WWW.WANWCOALITION.ORG

WANW Coalition Demands Nuclear Modernization Funding Be Diverted To Respond To The COVID-19 Crisis

(continued from previous page) This outbreak starkly highlights our misplaced national funding priorities. The 2021 budget includes nearly \$49 billion for nuclear weapons, enough money to purchase 460 million test kits at an estimated cost of \$100 each test with enough money left over for face masks and other protective equipment to offset the shortage being experienced by many hospitals. It's time to refocus our national priorities from creating threats to preventing and treating them.

The rapid spread of COVID-19 demonstrates even the previously unimaginable is possible. As we worry about overwhelmed medical infrastructure and a recession, we are seeing what Jeffrey Lewis, an arms control expert, calls a "nuclear war in slow motion." Any nuclear attack would overwhelm emergency response capabilities, and a nuclear exchange of just 1% of the world's stockpile could disrupt food supplies enough to cause a global famine. We can't completely control the appearance of a new virus, but it is within our power to make sure that a nuclear weapon is never used. Our prioritization of civilization-ending weapons is alarming in the face of a pandemic projected to take millions of lives – unless we act now and divert money from ending life to saving lives.

Nuclear weapons may seem like an issue that can be addressed later, but the Doomsday Clock is only 100 seconds to midnight which means we are closer to disaster than we have ever been. The Trump Administration continues to encourage a new arms race by destroying treaties, increasing nuclear weapons spending, and building new nuclear weapons at a time when we need to marshal all of our national resources to address COVID-19. This will mean making hard choices around funding priorities. Diverting money away from a new nuclear arms race can shift us from threatening life, to protecting life. We are all in this together, and by redirecting money slated to be spent on nuclear weapons, we can take care of those most impacted by COVID-19, now.

Deployment of low-yield nuclear weapons lowers the threshold for war

OpEd published in the Feb. 14, 2020 Seattle Times by WPSR's Dr. Bruce Amundson and Dr. Joseph Berkson

Current tensions with Iran, and President Donald Trump's impulsive decision-making in a very volatile environment, create an increased risk of actual use of nuclear weapons that should be sobering to all Americans. The U.S. Defense Department confirmed on Feb. 5 that the Navy has deployed a low-yield, submarine-launched ballistic missile warhead. Bill Arkin and Hans Kristensen of the Federation of American Scientists first disclosed the deployment a week before that.

"The administration's decision to deploy the W76-2 warhead remains a misguided and dangerous one," said U.S. Rep. Adam Smith, D-WA, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, adding, "The deployment of this warhead does nothing to make Americans safer. (continued on next page)"



WASHINGTON AGAINST NUCLEAR WEAPONS IS A STATEWIDE COALITION OF OVER 50 ORGANIZATIONS THAT AIMS TO PREVENT NUCLEAR WAR AND ABOLISH NUCLEAR WEAPONS. TO LEARN MORE OR JOIN, VISIT:

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Deployment of low-yield nuclear weapons lowers the threshold for war

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"This low-yield warhead gives the United States a weapon its advocates say is more "usable," and thus more effective as a deterrent. The U.S. National Security Strategy now describes a role for nuclear weapons against "non-nuclear strategic attacks and large-scale conventional aggression," explicitly saying that the W-76-2 is intended to "expand the range of credible U.S. options for responding to nuclear or non-nuclear strategic attacks.

"It is this new posturing for the low-yield Trident warhead that makes the potential for use of nuclear weapons much more likely. Though articulated as a counter to Russia, government officials today agree that this new warhead was all along intended to fill a niche of providing a weapon to counter imminent North Korea or Iranian attacks. Given the recent precedent-breaking strike against Iranian top military commander Qassem Soleimani, this should sound alarms.

As U.S. Rep. Ted Lieu, D-Calif., rightly pointed out, "There is no such thing as a low-yield nuclear war." U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein made a similar point in a 2017 Washington Post Op-Ed. Any nuclear war would result in one of the worst human catastrophes imaginable.

That's why our organization, Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility, joined dozens of organizations in opposing funding for deployment of the low-yield W76-2 Trident warhead in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). Chairman Smith led a concerted effort on the House side to defeat multiple attempts to fund the weapon. Unfortunately, the Senate's version of the NDAA, which included funding for deployment of the warhead, ultimately prevailed.

To an adversary, a submarine-launched missile with a low-yield nuclear warhead would likely be completely indistinguishable on radar from missiles armed with high-yield bombs. Therefore, an adversary may respond to such a launch with a full attack, immediately escalating the conflict to full nuclear war. This dramatically increases the chance of a nuclear exchange due to miscalculation or human error. (We've narrowly avoided such conflicts before, perhaps most famously on Sept. 26, 1983, when Soviet military officer Stanislav Petrov made a split-second decision not to trigger a nuclear war with the United States when he deemed a supposed incoming ballistic missile alert to be an error.)

The term "low-yield" is also misleading and could at some future date mislead a commander-in-chief. At 6.5 kilotons, these low-yield warheads are 591 times more powerful than the largest conventional weapon the United States has ever used, the GBU-43/B "Massive Ordnance Air Blast" (MOAB) bomb and 2,600 times more powerful than the 1995 Oklahoma City bomb. The W76-2 "low-yield" nuclear weapon can have up to 43% of the yield of the atomic bomb that leveled Hiroshima in 1945. According to the Columbia University Center for Nuclear Studies, that bomb killed between 90,000 and 166,000 people.

Deploying this weapon was a serious mistake, increasing the likelihood of a catastrophic nuclear war. With a motto of "prevention is the only cure," and recognizing there is no relevant medical "treatment" for the human carnage from nuclear war, Physicians for Social Responsibility urges all nine nuclear-armed countries to negotiate an agreement for the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Dr. Bruce Amundson is former WPSR vice president, and was co-founder of the Hanford-Chelyabinsk (Russia) Movement, established to confront the environmental and health legacies of nuclear arms production.

Dr. Joseph Berkson is a retired family practice physician, WPSR board member, and co-chair of the WPSR task force for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Stop state budget cuts during pandemic and focus on tax reform

By MARK VOSSLER, MAX SAVISHINSKY
AND STEPHEN BEZRUCHKA
Special to The Times

We are in a time of crisis, a time of great uncertainty. We don't know how many people will die of COVID-19, nor the extent of the economic harm that will result from physical distancing. We do know that the health and economic pain will be felt most acutely by low-income people and communities of color, and we must protect the programs and services that support those who are most vulnerable due to long-entrenched systemic inequities.

On April 1, The Seattle Times editorial board called for deep cuts to the state budget, and on April 3, Gov. Jay Inslee heeded that call, cutting \$235 million by line-item veto from the 2020

budget that the state Legislature approved last month. On the chopping block are programs for school counselors, medication assistance, climate-change mitigation and adaptation, mental health, and long-term care among many others.

As it stands, our state government is woefully underfunded, and there's little we can truly afford to cut. To mitigate and recover — sustainably — from the economic aspects of this disaster is to reform the most regressive state tax code in the country. Unfortunately, such reform runs counter to the prevailing supply-side dogma.

Our backward tax system deprives our state of the revenue it desperately needs to support the basic needs of our institutions and people. Divesting from critical social programs only compounds the damage, and the resulting harm would disproportionately hit those who are already vulnerable and suffering.

Even in the best of times, the most vulnerable among us are low-income children. Early-childhood health and education are the most influential determinants of adult health and financial well-being. Cutting programs that benefit low and middle-income children now will have a lasting deleterious

impact on the health and economic well-being of the residents of our state. The correlation between economic inequity and poor health outcomes is clear.

The most oft-repeated but erroneous piece of economic dogma is that cutting social spending and lowering taxes will stimulate growth. In fact, the opposite has been shown to be true time after time. Putting money in the hands of the poor increases consumer spending and stimulates economic growth,

far more than one-time cash transfers and tax cuts for the wealthy. Keeping money in the hands of the wealthy drives further accumulation of capital and exacerbates economic inequity. And inequity is closely correlated with declining health, as evidenced by the fact that, the world over, countries with greater in-

equality have lower overall life expectancy.

As health professionals, we are deeply worried about the determinants of poor health that cannot be treated by standard medical means. This is why we seek solutions at the societal level, to prevent that which we cannot cure.

We call for a halt to state budget cuts. We call for tax reform to commence early in the recovery phase from this crisis. Reforming our backward tax code should include cuts to sales and property taxes, which

hit low- and middle-income households hardest.

It should include an appropriately progressive income and capital-gains tax, which the wealthy can certainly afford. It should include tax credits for working families who form the

engine of our local economy.

A special session of the Legislature, later this year to review the budget after the pandemic phase passes and the economic impact on low-income communities is better understood, would also be in order. Pursuing shortsighted solutions to our current crises — such as cutting spending on public health and education — will not solve our economic and health problems; it will create new ones.



GABRIEL CAMPANARIO / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Another view

Read the editorial "Coronavirus requires painful cuts to Washington state budget" at st.news/coronavirusbudget

Mark Vossler is a Kirkland cardiologist, chairs the Climate Task Force and is president-elect of Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility.

Max Savishinsky is executive director, Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility.

Stephen Bezruchka is a senior lecturer, University of Washington School of Public Health, and board member, Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility. His views are his own and not those of the University of Washington.



On Police Violence, Racism, and Public Health

Our national organization, PSR, recently issued a statement on police violence and the killing of George Floyd, on behalf of the national network of PSR chapters. WPSR echoes these words, condemning violence and racism in all its forms, and mourning the death of George Floyd and all people of color who have suffered and died at the hands of a racist and overmilitarized police.

“PSR stands with health professionals who have long argued that police violence and systemic racism are a public health issue. We call on PSR members, who are devoted to fighting climate change and eliminating the threat posed by nuclear weapons, to be every bit as active in dismantling institutional racism in their communities. No just solution to the climate crisis or the nuclear threat will be possible unless we do so.” The full PSR statement can be found here:

<https://www.psr.org/blog/2020/06/01/statement-on-the-killing-of-george-floyd/>

Washington PSR will continue our commitment to work towards equity and social justice as an organization, and through our programs. As an organization working for climate justice, economic justice, and nuclear justice, we are obligated to speak out against systemic racism and to work with our coalition and community partners, and other PSR chapters, to help dismantle systems of white supremacy that perpetuate violence and against all forms of discrimination, injustice, and harm against people of color. We recognize that climate justice, economic justice, and nuclear justice cannot be achieved without racial justice.

We also recognize that statements are not enough to effectuate the change needed, and that - as with the major challenges to health that we work to address on a daily basis - action is required at every level of our unjust society. As such, WPSR is committed to go beyond these words, and to take concrete actions that will help dismantle the inherently inequitable systems that stand in the way of a peaceful, healthy, and just society. We call for fundamental reform of our police forces, which needs to include demilitarization, training in implicit bias, and early decisive disciplinary action for acts of racism. We call for redirection of funding for policing toward efforts to build resilient communities and break down economic inequity as methods to reduce violent crime.

We stand in solidarity with the protesters and urge our supporters to do the same. We also recognize the additional risks protesters are incurring in the midst of a pandemic, and we strongly encourage all to protect their own health and the health of their loved ones at home by maintaining a safe distance from one another and wearing masks and washing hands frequently, so that this important act of protest does not result in more sickness and death from the virus.

If you are able, we urge you to support the organizations working on-the-ground right now to fight racial injustice. Our movements are inextricably linked, and our mission to build an equitable and inclusive climate movement is only possible if we continue to fight for the health, safety, opportunity, and basic human rights of all people. Finally, as an organization dedicated to finding policy solutions to the greatest threats to human health, we encourage you to visit <https://www.joincampaignzero.org> to learn about - and become an advocate for - proven policy approaches to reducing police violence.





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