Strategizing for a Successful

US Nuclear Weapons Abolition Movement

**Introduction**

The US movement to abolish nuclear weapons is currently quite small, especially when measured against the task it faces, that is, persuading the US government to stop engaging in nuclear weapons development and instead become part of the global effort to eliminate the threat of nuclear annihilation from the world.

We know that it has been possible twice during the last century to build US anti-nuclear weapons movements strong enough to compel significant government action – once in the 1950s and once in the 1980s. The first movement forced an end to nuclear weapons testing in the atmosphere and set in motion diplomatic efforts that resulted in a number of international treaties relating to nuclear weapons. The second stopped explosive nuclear weapons testing underground, led to the removal of US intermediate-range nuclear weapons from Europe and stepped up the international diplomacy around nuclear weapons.

Throughout these years, the Doomsday Clock of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists has measured the changing level of danger the world faces from nuclear weapons. Today that clock stands at 100 seconds to midnight – the highest danger level ever recorded. Yet, as the nation’s attention focuses on the threats from climate change, racial inequality, attacks on democracy, gun violence, species loss, ocean acidification, food insecurity, homelessness and fresh water scarcity, it has proven easy to ignore the danger of nuclear weapons. The movement’s weakness reveals this all too clearly.

Therefore, for those of us who choose to focus on the nuclear weapons threat, a major challenge is to rebuild our powerful movement. Whether our work is aimed at Congressional action or international diplomacy, a strong people’s movement is a prerequisite to making progress. That is the subject of the document [“Strategizing for a Successful US Nuclear Weapons Abolition Movement.”](http://oregonpeaceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Strategizing-for-a-Successful-US-Nuclear-Weapons-Abolition-Movement-edit-3.docx)

Our movement is too small for us to be able to afford the divisions that currently separate us. At the same time, we must acknowledge that a number of different approaches toward abolishing nuclear weapons are underway, and – despite our convictions - none of us truly knows which is most likely to lead to success. Moreover, in order to deserve and sustain the support of Black, Indigenous and People of Color and other affected communities, we must pay close attention to their criticisms and concerns and integrate them into our work. Our movement is fortunate to include wide diversity. The challenge is to make that diversity a strength rather than a barrier. Thus, this document explores how the necessity to grow the movement in order for any of the approaches to be successful can help unify it and help us recruit additional support.

[“Strategizing for a Successful US Nuclear Weapons Abolition Movement”](http://oregonpeaceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Strategizing-for-a-Successful-US-Nuclear-Weapons-Abolition-Movement-edit-3.docx) sets out some **goals** we can agree upon and puts these goals in context. It suggests some **objectives** that can help us move toward those goals, and then – most importantly - explores many tactics by which the objectives can be – and are being – pursued. Lastly, it suggests how we can measure whether these tactics are effective in helping us achieve our objectives. Building such performance measures into our groups’ action plans is essential so that we can evaluate our success as we do our work.

Navigating within the document is easy. In the “Contents” section, which follows a brief foreword, is a set of internal links. By holding down the Ctrl key and clicking on a selection, you can jump directly to it. At the end of each section is an internal link that will take you back to the Contents section. In the Objectives section are additional links that will take you to details relating to each of the approaches mentioned. These subsections are the heart of the document.

If you or your group wants to try a new abolition approach, peruse the many tactical choices presented and select one or more that appeals to you. Links in some sections help you find additional information.

If you have questions, additions or suggestions, please write Peter Bergel at [pbergel@igc.org](mailto:pbergel@igc.org).

- Peter Bergel, July 2022