PSR-LA Year in Review
Highlights and successes from PSR-LA’s program work in 2019

Building Power by Working Together
A message from PSR-LA Executive Director Martha Dina Argüello and Associate Director Denise Duffield

2019 has been a year of tremendous growth for PSR-LA and as the year comes to a close, we want to thank you for everything you have done to support our work. While climate change and nuclear weapons continue to threaten our health and survival, the staff here at PSR-LA has not been deterred from our work to create environmental health and justice. By working together with impacted communities, we are holding regulatory agencies accountable and shifting power to win long-term systems change.

Over the past year, PSR-LA has achieved a number of exciting victories. Among important advancements, our work has helped establish a new Climate Emergency Mobilization Office in Los Angeles; driven the passage of numerous city and state resolutions supporting Back from the Brink, a national campaign to fundamentally change U.S. nuclear weapons policy; and dramatically increased public pressure for the Department of Energy, NASA, and Boeing to comply with cleanup agreements at the Santa Susana Field Lab. We have brought residents in Southeast and South Central Los Angeles together to strengthen their fight for the clean air and water they deserve, and through our work in the STAND-LA coalition, more than 75 Los Angeles organizations are collectively demanding a 2,500-foot human health and safety buffer that would begin to phase out neighborhood oil drilling. You can read more about these and other accomplishments in our 2019 Year in Review.
PSR-LA’s strength comes from our long history of commitment to intersectional, collaborative work and development of upstream solutions and policies that protect the most vulnerable. Additionally, as a physician membership organization, we are uniquely able to organize and leverage doctors and other health professionals to advance a strong public health message in all of our campaigns. When the credible voice of physicians meets the powerful voice of communities, we build the power that is needed to win important health protections and create real environmental justice.

Together we are stronger, and you are such an important part of this picture. We are grateful for all the many ways you participate in our campaigns, and our work wouldn’t be possible without the vital financial support that you provide through your generous contributions. We know there are always challenges, but with your support, we are able to set ambitious goals for the year ahead and continue to build on all the important work we have done this year. We are excited to share our accomplishments with you and hope you will continue to support us in the new year.

Thank you for supporting PSR-LA. Together, we can create a safer, healthier world.

Martha Dina Argüello
Executive Director

Denise Duffield
Associate Director

Amplifying the Voice of Health Professionals

Health professionals have a crucial role to play in the world of advocacy. As a membership organization, PSR-LA brings the voice of physicians and other health professionals to the forefront of health policy debates. Through our Health Ambassador Program, we provide training and education that builds the capacity of health professionals to participate in advocacy efforts which strengthen public health. Health Ambassadors work with community members, and they have regular opportunities to engage in direct policy advocacy with legislators, decision makers, and the media. For example, doctors and other health professionals supported our STAND-LA Coalition this year by joining directly-impacted community residents and hundreds of supporters at a City Council Committee meeting, as well as in delegations with City Council staff on multiple occasions. As public health advocates, they raised their voices about the vital need for a 2,500-foot setback between oil drilling and sensitive sites through testimony and a sign-on letter from doctors and scientists. With this support, we countered the industry-backed conclusion that there is not enough evidence to act with a science and prevention-based policy approach backed by physicians who insist that we must prevent what we cannot cure.
Nuclear Threats

Nuclear Disarmament: 2019 was a banner year for PSR-LA’s nuclear disarmament work. In March, we hired our first Nuclear Threats Associate, Alex Jasset, and assumed a central role in coordinating “Back from the Brink: The Call to Prevent Nuclear War,” a national campaign that seeks to fundamentally change nuclear weapons policy in the United States. PSR-LA’s leadership role has helped the campaign to grow exponentially. This year, 20 municipal resolutions endorsing the campaign’s five-point policy platform were passed in the country, bringing the total number to 40, and three new statewide resolutions were adopted as well. The campaign gained 120 new organizational endorsements, bringing the total number to over 300. PSR-LA planned and hosted an incredibly successful webinar with participants from 37 states, and we are now actively assisting these communities to get local and state resolutions passed. Locally, PSR-LA led efforts for Santa Monica to pass a Back from the Brink resolution, and we organized a successful visit with Congressman Adam Schiff, during which he said he was persuaded to become a co-sponsor of H.R. 921, a bill that would make it the policy of the United States to renounce the option of using nuclear weapons first. We also participated in the Alliance for Nuclear Accountability’s Annual DC Days event, where our Associate Director, Denise Duffield, was recognized for her outstanding work to address nuclear threats with ANA’s Bill Mitchell Grassroots Activist of the Year award.

PSR-LA staff members Denise Duffield and Alex Jasset, along with other disarmament activists, meet with U.S. Representative, Adam Schiff.

Santa Susana Field Lab (SSFL) Cleanup: In 2019, PSR-LA continued our decades-long efforts to ensure that all nuclear and chemical contamination at SSFL is fully cleaned up. We played an instrumental role in engaging the Newsom Administration on the need for the full, promised cleanup of SSFL and are heartened that the Department of Toxic Substance Control (DTSC) is now holding the Department of Energy and NASA accountable for complying with the cleanup agreements they signed with the state. PSR-LA also helped organize a sign-on letter urging DOE, NASA, and CalEPA to uphold the cleanup agreements. The effort was led by Rep. Julia Brownley and resulted in signatures by Senator Feinstein and seven other California Congressmembers. In May, PSR-LA gave a presentation before the LA Regional Water Quality Control Board to highlight Boeing’s 57 exceedances of pollution limits in stormwater runoff from SSFL that it attributes to the Woolsey Fire, which began at and burned most of the site. In July, we worked with community members to organize Rock the Cleanup, an event to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the partial nuclear meltdown at SSFL. The event attracted over 200 people including local elected officials and Kim and Kourtney Kardashian, who filmed the event for their television show which aired December 1st.

PSR-LA's Denise Duffield and Simi Valley resident Jeni Knack hold signs at the November 20, 2019 NASA meeting.
Stand Together Against Neighborhood Drilling: STAND-LA, a coalition co-founded and co-chaired by PSR-LA, is pushing for an unprecedented public health and environmental justice policy — a 2,500-foot human health and safety buffer that would phase out active oil and gas wells dangerously close to homes, schools, medical facilities and other sensitive land uses. We have built a coalition of over 75 public health, environmental justice, environmental, faith-based, labor and community organizations across Los Angeles to support this policy, with leadership from frontline communities. Now that the Los Angeles Petroleum Administrator’s report has been released, STAND-LA is engaging the City Council and City Attorney to move the policy forward. Our work emphasizes the need for a just transition for workers and communities during a phase out of oil and gas production, including the creation of a workforce development and economic revitalization plan paid for by the oil industry itself. Additionally, through our work in the Last Chance Alliance and VISION coalitions, we are extending our oil and gas work to the state-level.

Climate and Health Emergency: LEAP-LA, a climate justice coalition co-founded by PSR-LA, focused on a comprehensive plan to decarbonize, detoxify, and democratize Los Angeles’ economy. In 2019, the coalition won approval from the Los Angeles City Council and Mayor Eric Garcetti for the establishment of a Climate Emergency Mobilization Office and Climate Emergency Commission to guide these efforts. We have won $1.2 million in dedicated funding from the City, including for seven community assemblies across the City aimed at engaging frontline communities in shaping the concrete projects of this Department. PSR-LA is working closely with the Mayor’s Sustainability Office and two City Council offices on implementing the goals of the commission.

South Central Residents Fight for Clean Air: The South Central Los Angeles-Project to Understand the Sources of Air Pollution and Health Impacts (SCLA-PUSH) initiative is a collaborative effort led by PSR-LA in partnership with community organizations, community residents and academic partners that aims to strengthen the capacity of community residents and advocates to better understand the state of air quality and health in their community, and to engage in air monitoring and data analysis. SCLA-PUSH has hosted over 90 individuals at two informational sessions, and 40 attended our two community mapping workshops. We have strategically deployed four air monitors throughout SCLA to monitor particulate matter, and through two Air Quality Academies (AQA), we have now trained 50 community residents to understand the science of air pollutants, the process of monitoring air quality and collecting data, and how to engage in policy and regulatory spaces. In September, the AQA graduates used the skills they have been building when they attended the South Coast Air Quality Management Department board meeting to advocate for South Central Los Angeles to be considered for an air quality improvement plan.
Are You Within 500 Feet? Research has shown that living within 500 feet of a stationary source of pollution increases risks to health including asthma, cardiovascular disease, and even cancer. PSR-LA’s 500 Feet Project tackles this issue by empowering residents to identify the hazardous land uses near sensitive areas in their communities. We work closely with community-based organizations, academic advisors, field experts, and community residents to develop community-grounded solutions that address environmental injustices. This year, we hosted three ground truthing workshops with dozens of South Central LA residents, including those we trained in collaboration with our SCLA-PUSH project. These residents were able to take their ground truthing to the next level by making a direct connection between incompatible land use and its impact on air quality.

People Power: The Los Angeles Clean Up Green Up (CUGU) campaign and ordinance, which originally excluded South Central LA, was recently written into both the South and Southeast LA community plans. PSR-LA is now engaging with the City around its implementation. Through statewide participation in California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA), PSR-LA worked closely with Assemblymember Robert Rivas’ office to help develop and successfully advocate for the passage of AB 1628, which expanded the in-statute definition of environmental justice. With CEJA, PSR-LA also successfully forestalled the passage of several bills that would weaken the California Environmental Quality Act, including SB 25 and SB 621.
Toxics & Water

Time for a Change! Californians for a Healthy and Green Economy (CHANGE) is a coalition of diverse organizations with a collective vision of creating economically just and environmentally healthy communities in California. Our work focuses on reducing our exposure and use of toxic chemicals while centering on environmental justice by focusing on community-driven campaigns and policies. In 2019, we strengthened our membership through educational capacity building, and leadership development workshops. We also developed a number of webinars and other popular education tools that highlight policy efforts in California and educate the public about the need to shift towards safer solutions that prevent exposure to toxic chemicals in environmental justice communities. The highlight of our year was the first ever CHANGE People’s Summit, which brought together leaders from impacted communities throughout California.

Organizing for Clean Water: PSR-LA’s water project aims to address drinking water quality issues in Southeast Los Angeles by bringing together community groups to examine their water systems. Participants are building their capacity to advocate for clean water by gaining a better understanding of the complexity of the Los Angeles water infrastructure and the agencies in charge, as well as the sources of contamination that are impacting water quality. In October, we took a tour of the Los Angeles Basin to get an introduction to how toxic sites are impacting Los Angeles, and how innovation and leadership in industry can help address water quality issues. In December, the Our Water, Our Health summit addressed water quality, how it impacts health, and what can we do to improve water quality in South East LA.

Thank you so much for your generous support! Please use the enclosed remittance envelope to give your tax-deductible gift to PSR-LA today. To learn more about our work, email us at info@psr-la.org or call us at (213) 689-9170 or visit our website at www.psr-la.org.