

NEWS RELEASE

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More than 12,000 Vermonters send one clear message: It's time to retire Vermont Yankee and transition to clean, local power

MONTPELIER – The Vermont Public Interest Research Group (VPIRG) held a news conference today announcing the results of one of the organization's most successful summer outreach campaigns ever, generating over 12,000 postcards signed by Vermonters interested in seeing the state's aging nuclear plant retired in 2012 in favor of clean energy alternatives.

The unprecedented outpouring of support for the timely closure of Vermont Yankee comes in the face of a blitz of radio and newspaper advertisements sponsored by the corporate owners of the Vermont Yankee nuclear plant.

The state Legislature is expected to vote next year on a proposal that could allow the out-of-state owners of Vermont's troubled nuclear plant to make hundreds of millions of dollars of additional profit by extending the facility's operating license another 20 years. If legislators choose not to grant Vermont Yankee's request to move forward in seeking approval from the Public Service Board, the plant will be retired as expected in less than four years.

"One of the best ways to gauge public opinion is to go out and actually talk with people, face to face and door to door," said Ben Walsh, who helped to run VPIRG's summer campaign office. "We've done that from one end of Vermont to the other, and I can tell you that from Grand Isle to Brattleboro, Vermonters are ready to make the switch from an unreliable and aging nuclear plant to a clean, local, renewable energy future."

This summer Vermonters have been exposed to two very different approaches in the debate over Vermont Yankee's future. The Louisiana-based corporate owners of Vermont Yankee have spent large sums of money on ads beginning with the ironic tag line, "Vermont to Vermont." Meanwhile, VPIRG outreach workers have hit the streets, on foot and on bicycle, to recruit support for alternatives to the catastrophe-prone plant one Vermont at a time. They set an ambitious goal of collecting 10,000 signatures on postcards to legislators in districts around the state. Earlier this month, they smashed that goal and have gathered over 12,000 postcards to date.

"Having grown up here, I want to do everything I can to ensure that Vermont has a strong economy, a safe environment and reliable power for the future. To me, that's more than a corporate slogan. It means we need to develop our local renewable energy resource now," said VPIRG canvasser Leah Marsters.

More than 20 clean energy activists gathered around a ten foot tall mock thermometer designed to show the number of postcards collected by the group. The postcards are being sent to the specific legislators or candidates representing the districts where they were gathered.