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2020 Action Celebrates 25 Years of Effective Activism

AMHERST, Mass.—2020 Action, one of the nation's pioneering environment and peace organizations is celebrating its 25th Anniversary.

Founded in 1986 by longtime activist Lois Barber, 2020 Vision had a novel approach to encourage busy people in her neighborhood to turn their care and concern about the world into meaningful influence on government policy. Barber has since won many awards for her innovative work.

The organization was named 2020 Vision because, as their slogan said, '20 Minutes a Month, \$20 a Year (the cost of a membership)—and a Vision of a Better World'. "In a few months," the longtime Amherst resident recalled, "We had 300 members. Soon 3,000. Then 30,000!"

"When 2020 was founded there were roughly 70,000 nuclear weapons in the world," Barber says. "Now there are just over 20,000." For 25 years, 2020 has consistently focused on the treaties, agreements, and legislation that have led to this 75 percent reduction in the number of nuclear weapons. In addition, 2020 members helped achieve US ratification of the Chemical Weapons Treaty, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, the New START Treaty, and have significantly influenced hundreds of other policies. "I really think we helped make the world a little safer," Barber says with just a hint of pride.

In 2010, the organization changed its name to 2020 Action. "It was time to move from 'Vision' to 'Action', she explained. Every month 2020 members receive a simple postcard focused on one current US peace or environment issue. Each postcard includes background information on the issue, a suggested action to take—usually to send a personal message to a policymaker facing a vote on that issue, and the policymaker's contact information. Barber describes the 2020 postcard as "the world's smallest publication." "Each postcard now also features a photograph that celebrates the beauty and wonder of the natural world," Barber explains, "combining art with activism."

"Over these last 25 years, 2020 has sent out more than a million postcards to its members and followers," Barber said, "each card urging the reader to take a small but meaningful action." "Surveys show that every month the great majority of our members take the recommended action and send a personal message to the targeted policymaker. It all adds up to social change."

Barber points to research that shows that personal communication between constituents and their representatives—the kind of communication that 2020 promotes—is what works these days. "It is more effective than 'cookie-cutter emails' and 'click on petitions' so common on the Internet", she states. Barber referred to a recent conversation with Representative Barney Frank (D-MA), "The more effort that goes into the communication to elected officials from voters, the more impact it will have."

"The Occupy Wall Street demonstrations show that people are mad as hell about our government's policies," claims Barber. "At 2020 we keep consistent, focused, pressure on policymakers. It is a way for people to turn their passion and outrage into meaningful action."

Attached: 2020—25 Years of Achievement; 2020 Endorsements

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