



# A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ALLIANCE FOR NUCLEAR ACCOUNTABILITY



## *TWENTY- THREE YEARS OF DETERMINED ACTIVISM*

Back in the 1980s, activists and community residents began to investigate the environmental impacts of facilities in which work was being conducted on nuclear weapons.

The Hanford Reservation in Washington State was one of the sites raising major concerns. It had a long history of radiological and chemical contamination both on and off of its grounds.

In an effort to organize stronger opposition to the legacy of the federal government's nuclear weapons program, these activists organized a meeting with groups working around other sites across the nuclear weapons complex. In 1987, the first national meeting of grassroots groups was held in Colorado, at Camp La Foret, near Colorado Springs. About twenty people participated representing a dozen groups from U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) nuclear weapons sites, including Hanford, Fernald, Rocky Flats, Idaho, Oregon, New Mexico, and Savannah River. It was a productive meeting: everyone in attendance could see the benefits of working together.

As a result of this meeting, these grassroots groups launched the **Nuclear Safety Campaign** in 1986. The Nuclear Safety Campaign began with a commitment to grassroots organizing and an understanding that groups around the country needed a venue to meet and strategize. While other, national organizations such as the National Resources Defense Council, Greenpeace, SANE and Physicians for Social Responsibility worked on nuclear issues, they did not give much attention to the problems of communities in which the facilities are located. The commitment of groups participating in the Nuclear Safety Campaign was to raise awareness about the impacts of the nuclear weapons complex. This meant building relationships among activists around the country and addressing the linkages among sites and issues. DOE was in the midst of a 'shell game,' shifting risks by moving nuclear materials and wastes from one site to another and pitting communities against each other. In addition, a complex-wide perspective meant taking on the idea of nuclear weapons production. It made more sense to remove the source of the problem – new weapons production and testing – instead of just paying attention to cleaning up the messes left behind in the past.

To incorporate the focus on weapons, the group adopted the name **Military Production Network** in 1987. In 1997, it was changed to **Alliance for Nuclear Accountability** to better reflect its comprehensive mission. As of 2010, ANA has 34 member groups.

The Alliance for Nuclear Accountability has remained dedicated to the strategy first started by the Nuclear Safety Campaign. During the past 23 years its members have worked together as a network to influence national policies related to nuclear weapons production, testing, research, as well as clean-up of contaminated sites and public and worker health.

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For example:

- Using the National Environmental Policy Act and related laws to slow nuclear weapons production and demonstrate that the U.S. had ample supplies of nuclear material.
- Leading campaigns to block funding for the New Production Reactor and other dangerous, unnecessary weapons construction programs.
- Advocating for the release of National Cancer Institute reports on radioactive iodine fallout exposure from U.S. nuclear weapons testing, then pushing government to launch a public health campaign on the risks of thyroid cancer from this contamination.
- Challenging DOE's so-called "accelerated clean-up" strategy, which would have left more radioactive wastes at sites, and stopping its Risk-Based End States program.
- Pressuring DOE to establish Site-Specific Advisory Boards on clean-up and the Centers for Disease Control to create Health Effects Subcommittees.
- Playing a leading role in ensuring that Radiation Compensation Recovery Act applied to radioactive wastes on DOE sites.
- Stopping "Complex 21," a late 1990s scheme to build a new generation of nuclear weapons plants.
- Stopping the Modern Pit Facility, a plan to manufacture new plutonium cores for bombs.
- Stopping funding for the Reliable Replacement Warhead.
- Cutting \$1 billion for nuclear weapons programs from the 2009 "Stimulus Act".
- Ending funding for the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste dump.

To support the activities of grassroots groups around the country, ANA has sponsored an annual opportunity for them to meet in Washington, DC for "DC Days," a week of meetings with policy-makers on nuclear issues. In addition, ANA has prepared a series of "report cards" and reports, for example, on water contamination, which inform grassroots activities.

The network and its member groups have also had major impacts on many local, site-related decisions, such as at Fernald, in Ohio, Rocky Flats, in Colorado, and at the Nevada Test Site. One of the reasons is that ANA has helped to change the way that issues are framed. Rather than allowing DOE and others to define problems as purely local, ANA has exposed them as part of larger issues. Groups are now able to link themselves to national campaigns against a corrupt system. This means that local agendas are no longer defined as "NIMBY" (Not In My Backyard). Instead, activists look for solutions that do not shift the burden of risks onto others. The reasons for ANA's successes are many. Paramount is its continued commitment to grassroots organizing, to taking on a system rather than piecemeal problems, and to enhancing collaboration. ANA sponsors meetings around the country and facilitates frequent conference calls and email interaction to ensure that knowledge is shared and ideas are discussed – so that broad consensus on strategies can emerge.