

Poor Peoples' Campaign Rally

Good morning! My name is Joe Hodgkin. I'm a hospitalist physician at Mass General and the co-chair for nuclear disarmament at Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility. It is an honor to stand today with my friends and colleagues at the Poor People's Campaign, especially Savina Martin and Janice Guzman, with whom I had the chance to do an event last year. Thank you for inviting me to join you.

Folks, I have good news and bad news. I'm going to start with the bad news.

The bad news is that if a nuclear weapon were detonated in Boston, it would vaporize downtown and envelop the surrounding neighborhoods and suburbs in a firestorm.

The bad news is that there are still 12,000 of these weapons in the world today. 3,000 of those weapons are ready to launch, on hair-trigger alert. 90% are in the hands of Russia and the United States.

The bad news is that the ongoing wars in Ukraine and Gaza, and the tensions over Taiwan and between India and Pakistan all are raising the risk that these weapons will be used, intentionally or by accident.

The bad news is that a nuclear war wouldn't just kill millions of people and collapse the global economy, it would also drop global temperatures and rainfall and cause massive famine.

The bad news is that every step in the life cycle of these weapons, from uranium mining to plutonium processing to weapons testing to waste disposal, has disproportionately harmed women, children, people of color, and indigenous people around the world.

The bad news is that we are in the process of spending over a trillion dollars on upgrading our arsenal, money which could be spent on ending poverty; providing housing, education, and healthcare; and ending our climate crisis.

Who's ready for some good news?

The good news is that our movement has won massive victories on this issue before.

The good news is that in the 1960s, when we found that children around the country had radioactive strontium in their teeth because of nuclear weapons testing, we rose up and stopped atmospheric weapons testing with the Partial Test Ban Treaty.

The good news is that in the 1980s, when the Reagan administration was escalating the Cold War, we rose up with the Nuclear Freeze Movement, rallied a million people in Central Park, and forced the administration to reverse course, signing the INF treaty and ultimately ending the arms race.

The good news is that in 2017, we went to the United Nations and passed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, making nuclear weapons illegal under international law.

The good news is that the number of nuclear weapons in the world is down, from 60,000 back in the 80s, to 12,000 today.

The good news is that here in the US, we are rising up again with a common-sense platform called Back from the Brink. This platform demands No First Use, ending sole presidential authority to launch nuclear weapons, ending hair-trigger alert, ending the more than trillion dollar plan for new weapons, and a new, multilateral, verifiable treaty to get rid of nuclear weapons for once and for all.

The good news is that this Back from the Brink platform has already been endorsed by the state legislatures of California, Maine, New Jersey, Oregon, Rhode Island; the city governments of most major cities around the country including Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Minneapolis, Salt Lake City, and Washington DC; twenty municipalities in Massachusetts including Boston, Worcester, Springfield, Cambridge, Somerville; and 42 US House Reps including Reps Neal, McGovern, Pressley, and Lynch of Massachusetts.

And the good thing is that there's something that we all can do! The Massachusetts State Legislature has dragged their feet on our Back from the Brink resolution and won't let it out of committee. Help us tell Senator Timilty and Rep Gonzalez to let the resolution out of committee. S.1487 is the Back from the Brink resolution, and S.1488 would establish a Citizens' Commission to make an action plan against nuclear weapons for the state.

And help us get the rest of the Massachusetts delegation on board with Back from the Brink by calling reps Auchincloss, Clark, Keating, Moulton, and Trahan! The federal resolution is H. Res 77!

I'm here to tell you that nuclear weapons waste our resources and put us all in danger, but we can take this issue on, and we can win. We've done it before, and we will do it again. Thank you!