

As Trump postures, a national nuclear abolition campaign moves forward - THE HILL

By Robert Dodge, opinion contributor — 09/05/18



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World nuclear tensions are mounting, fueled by President Trump's careless rhetoric and unilateral withdrawal from the International Iran nuclear deal coupled with rising tensions in our relationship with Russia and the on again, off again meeting between the Trump administration and North Korea with his premature declaration of "problem solved." The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists to move the "Nuclear Doomsday Clock" to 2 minutes till midnight earlier this year, the closest it has been since its inception. Yet there is emerging a national movement right here in the U.S. recognizing the humanitarian and public health imperative presented by any use of nuclear weapons even in a limited regional conflict.

Seventy-three years after the U.S. nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9th, 1945, this movement which started last fall is taking shape and moving quickly across our nation.

Following the July, 2017, U.N. Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons adopted by 122 nations and currently being ratified around the world, the U.S. effort called "Back from the Brink: A Call to Prevent Nuclear War" was begun. The grassroots campaign endorses the Treaty and important protective

policies such as ending the President's sole, unchecked authority to launch a nuclear attack, renouncing the option of using nuclear weapons first, taking U.S. nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert, and canceling U.S. plans to replace its entire nuclear arsenal with enhanced weapons.

This Call was crafted by dozens of organizations including Physicians for Social Responsibility, the Union of Concerned Scientists, and Soka Gakkai International.

The U.S. Council of Mayors unanimously adopted the Resolution at their annual June meeting in Boston where it was sponsored by Mayor Franklin Cownie of Des Moines, Iowa. This month, the Los Angeles and Baltimore City Councils unanimously adopted the Resolution on August 8 and 6 respectively. Eleven other cities around the nation as well as over 150 faith organizations, NGOs, and thousands of individuals have done so as well.

Leading the national effort, the California Legislature passed the resolution in Assembly member Monique Limón's AJR 33 in the State Assembly on August 20 and in the Senate on August 28. This measure from the nation's largest state, urges our federal leaders and our nation to embrace the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, to make nuclear disarmament the centerpiece of our national security policy, and to spearhead a global effort to prevent nuclear war. The Call itself can be endorsed by all, empowering citizens to take action in the international movement to abolish nuclear weapons.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, once ratified by 50 nation states, will ban nuclear weapons, just as every other weapon of mass destruction including chemical and biological weapons have been banned. The international effort for the passage of this treaty was led by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), recipient of the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize, a coalition of 513 partner organizations in 103 nations. Open for signature since last September, currently there are 60 nations that have signed the Treaty and 14 nations that have ratified it, the latest being New Zealand, which ratified last month.

The driving force for this movement has been the existential threat posed by nuclear weapons and the recognition that there is no meaningful medical or humanitarian response to nuclear war. The medical imperative demands prevention, and prevention can only be achieved with the complete abolition of these weapons.

The Resolution and efforts like it around the world give us hope. As atomic bomb survivor, Setsuko Thurlow, co-recipient of last year's Nobel Peace Prize declared, "Nuclear weapons have always been immoral, now they are also illegal. Together, let us go forth and change the world!"

Each of us has an opportunity to speak out and act. When future generations ask us what we did when the planet was threatened, we will be able to say we took a stand for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

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