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Letters are published as space becomes available and letters must be limited to 400 words or less. The Enterprise reserves the right to edit letters for content and length. Only one name will be published as the author of a letter.

No letter is published without a first and last name, complete mailing address and daytime telephone number. E-mailed letters must include the same information.

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GUEST COLUMN

# GETTING ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF HISTORY

We must do something to make the future safe for our children

Jan. 22, 2021 will one day be looked back as a turning point in history. On that day, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons enters into force. To mark the day, the bells at the Loretto Motherhouse in Nerinx will ring in celebration. They will join faith communities and houses of worship across the country.

In other places, banners reading "Nuclear Weapons are Illegal" will be hung at nuclear weapons production sites and military bases; protests will take place at colleges and universities that participate in weapons programs; citizens will call on corporations and financial institutions to divest themselves of support for nuclear weapons production.

The Treaty, approved in 2017 by 122 countries at the United Nations, is not a magic wand. It won't make nuclear weapons go away. But it will place them in the same legal category as chemical weapons, biological weapons, land mines, and poison gas, all of which have been outlawed by the international community.

Today, nine nations possess more than 13,000 nuclear weapons—an all out nuclear exchange between the U.S. and Russia would kill hundreds of millions of people and destroy every major city in both countries in one afternoon. But it doesn't take that to ruin us—even a "small" exchange between India and Pakistan would trigger "nuclear winter"—a cloud of debris circling the planet that would make growing crops impossible for at least a decade and contaminate virtually every water source we rely on. Remote rural areas would not be spared.

That's the existential threat of nuclear weapons—they threaten our very existence.

Those nine nuclear nations say the Treaty doesn't apply to them because they haven't signed it. Technically, they are right—it has no legal force in the United States. But it does have moral force. And it becomes the work of all of us who want our children and grandchildren to grow and thrive without the fear of nuclear destruction to make the promise of the Treaty real.

Stalwart conservatives (Henry



Ralph Hutchison  
Oak Ridge Environmental  
Peace Alliance Coordinator

Kissinger, Sam Nunn, Admiral William Perry) have called for the abolition of nuclear weapons, declaring that they make us less secure, not more secure. Hundreds of generals and diplomatic leaders around the world have joined in their call. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is an important step in turning those calls into action.

In the last 50 years, every U.S. President has declared nuclear weapons the single greatest security threat we face. Republican presidents—Reagan and Bush—have done more to reduce nuclear stockpiles than Democrats. But all of them realize the current situation is irrational and unsustainable. Today, according to a panel of experts at the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, the danger is greater than ever before.

The risk of an accidental launch, a computer hack, a chain of command failure, a mistaken reading on a radar screen—these are all very real possibilities. Any one of them could trigger the end of life as we know it on our planet.

This threat is too great to be left to politicians. In the U.S. alone, plans to spend \$2 trillion to "modernize" our nuclear stockpile have triggered a new global nuclear arms race. That's two trillion dollars that won't provide health care, address the opioid epidemic, pay our teachers, or provide living-wage jobs.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is a beacon—it shines on a future that is safer than our past. We owe it to our children to walk into that light, to insist that our leaders stop wasting money on nuclear weapons and commit themselves, instead, to getting on the right side of history. Ring bells, write letters, offer prayers—we can all do something, and we must, to make the future safe for our children.

*Editor's note: Ralph Hutchison is coordinator of the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance. On Jan. 22, 2021 he will be hanging a banner and a copy of the Treaty on the fence at the Y-12 Nuclear Weapons Complex in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.*

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

## Week 2 of the 2021 Legislative Session



Jimmy Higdon  
State Senator

As State Senator, I take pride in staying engaged with the 14th Senate District Community. As an elected official this usually occurs by speaking face-to-face during meetings or community events. This past week, I had the honor of speaking to constituents at several legislative coffee events across the district. Writing these legislative updates provides me a welcomed means of reconnecting with you and others back home that could not attend.

The Kentucky General Assembly is making the most of the 30-day legislative session. In the first eight days back in Frankfort, lawmakers have already delivered seven bills to the governor's desk.

The past 10 months have been challenging for all of us. Anxieties surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic have extended beyond the dangerous health risk the virus poses to the vulnerable and the indirect consequences to students, businesses and mental health. The passage of priority House and Senate bills verifies the legislature's commitment to being a co-equal branch of government and ensuring the representative branch of state government has a seat at the table as life-altering decisions are considered.

Senate Bill (SB) 1 is a bill that better defines executive authority during a state of emergency. It brings the representative branch of government to the table to be a voice for the communities its members represent. The bill will require legislative authorization before the governor can extend an executive order beyond 30 days if the order places restrictions on various public and private entities. The same requirement would exist for emergency executive orders. Similarly, it would require mutual agreement between the Governor and the Attorney General to suspend state statute during a state of emergency. Taking a more targeted approach to addressing a state of emergency, SB1 would allow local officials to request an extension of executive orders only for their area and only for the amount of time they ask.

For a long time governors and their administrations have been able to blur the lines between executive and legislative branch authorities by making law through the use of the emergency regulatory process. SB

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