



# Acting Locally to Prevent Nuclear War

*A Back from the Brink Supporter Toolkit*

Today, the threat of nuclear war is greater than it has been in decades. The catastrophic risks are real and urgent—threatening our communities, our environment, and the very future of human civilization. Dangerous policies remain in place that heighten these risks, diplomacy has been sidelined for too long, and US decisionmakers plan to spend up to \$2 trillion over the next few decades on new nuclear bombs, missiles, submarines, and other instruments for waging nuclear war and a global arms race. And the only way to eliminate these risks and truly prevent a nuclear war is to abolish nuclear weapons.

That's where we the people and **Back from the Brink: The Call to Prevent Nuclear War** come in.

Back from the Brink is a national grassroots movement that the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) helped found in 2017, rooted in the belief that the loud, powerful demand for change must come from the ground up. It's a way for any concerned, engaged person to get involved and have an impact in their community, and connect with others around the country doing the same advocacy, organizing, and public education work.

Folks just like you are testifying in town halls, helping pass resolutions, meeting with their members of Congress and local and state officials, working with community groups, and so much more. They are making the important contrast between federal spending on nuclear weapons and much-needed investments in families, communities, and social, economic, and racial justice programs.

This toolkit lays out a number of simple ways you can get involved:

- Engaging on social media
- Urging your local and state elected officials to endorse the campaign
- Spreading the word via local media
- Working with other groups and leaders in your community
- Passing a resolution in your local government

## The Back from the Brink Policy Agenda

### *Five Steps to a Safer World*

The Back from the Brink campaign calls on the United States to lead a global effort to prevent nuclear war by:

- 1) renouncing the option of using nuclear weapons first;
- 2) ending the sole, unchecked authority of any president to launch a nuclear attack;
- 3) taking US nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert;
- 4) canceling the plan to replace its entire arsenal with enhanced weapons; and
- 5) actively pursuing a verifiable agreement among nuclear-armed states to eliminate their nuclear arsenals.

You don't have to be an expert and it doesn't have to take much of your time. That's up to you. And we are here to help, to connect you with others, offer you more tools and resources, and suggest timely actions you can take. If you have questions, contact UCS Communications and Outreach Specialist Madison Arnold-Scerbo at [MArnoldScerbo@ucsusa.org](mailto:MArnoldScerbo@ucsusa.org).

## Educate and Advocate on Social Media

Many of us spend a lot of time connecting with family, friends, colleagues, elected officials, and even strangers via social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. There are many ways to use your social media presence to spread the word about the dangers of nuclear weapons—and motivate others to take action.

We encourage you to follow and promote Back from the Brink on one or more social media channels.

- **Facebook:** Back from the Brink: The Call to Prevent Nuclear War
- **Twitter:** @BackFromBrink
- **Instagram:** @BackFromBrink

See the box below for some sample posts you can share, and don't forget to tag us!

Social media is also a great way to express your views as a constituent directly to your local and state elected officials, as well as your members of Congress. Social media "handles" for decisionmakers can often be found easily on their legislative website.

## Urge Local and State Elected Officials to Endorse the Campaign

Central to Back from the Brink is the belief that nuclear weapons matter to people at the local level. We have the power to encourage our local and state officials to push for policies that will keep us all safe from the consequences of nuclear weapons. Your mayor, city councilors, state senators and representatives—they all need to hear from you.

**Email your local elected officials** using our sample language (see p. 5) as a guide. You can find their contact information at [www.usa.gov/elected-officials](http://www.usa.gov/elected-officials) or your city, town, or county's website. Identifying and reaching out directly to your elected officials' key staff people can often lead to success. Having trouble finding contact information? Send an email to Madison at [MArnoldScerbo@ucsusa.org](mailto:MArnoldScerbo@ucsusa.org).

**Don't forget to follow up.** If you don't get a response within two weeks, contact them again. It might take some persistence to get your message heard. If emailing doesn't seem to be working, try calling or mailing a letter.

**Amplify your voice by building a team.** If your elected officials hear a similar message from a group of people, they may be more receptive. Who else in your community can you recruit? Can you organize a meeting with local officials?

## Spread the Word

How information is shared and exchanged is changing rapidly, both globally and within communities.

## Sample Social Media Posts

### TWITTER

The threat of #nuclearwar is urgent and growing—risking our communities, environment, and the very future of civilization. Fortunately, @BackfromBrink is building a safer and more just world free from these risks. Learn more and join the #BftB campaign: <https://youtu.be/fk22jxem6ik>

### FACEBOOK

The threat of nuclear war is real and urgent, yet the United States plans to spend billions on new, destabilizing nuclear weapons while critical social, economic, and environmental programs are underfunded.

Back from the Brink is sounding the alarm and proposing simple solutions for a safer, more just world. Get involved at [preventnuclearwar.org](http://preventnuclearwar.org). <https://youtu.be/fk22jxem6ik>



*The Back from the Brink Campaign is making the important contrast between federal spending on nuclear weapons and much-needed investments in families, communities, and social, economic, and racial justice programs. Our campaign video, available on YouTube, can be shared via email and social media. In this still, organizers at a Philadelphia City Council meeting show support for the city's Back from the Brink resolution, which passed in October 2019.*

Traditional media outlets, such as your local newspapers (daily, weekly, or alternative) and local radio stations and public radio affiliates, are still important vehicles to raise public awareness, share information, and shape public attitudes.

**Write a letter to the editor (LTE).** LTEs to your local or regional newspaper are an effective and easy way to reach a large audience about nuclear weapons abolition. They can help you reach more activists in your area who would be willing to join your movement and bring the issue to the attention of your elected officials.

Check out the UCS guide [Writing an Effective Letter to the Editor](#) for some helpful tips. And, for ideas about how to make the case that nuclear weapons are important to your specific community, email Madison at [MArnoldScerbo@ucsusa.org](mailto:MArnoldScerbo@ucsusa.org).

**Engage with other content providers.** Local podcasts, blog sites, or community listservs can also be effective platforms for advocacy. UCS can help identify those local outlets and provide background and contact information.

## Work with Others in Your Community

The nuclear weapons abolition movement is intertwined with other justice movements because communities of color bear the disproportionate social, environmental, and health burdens associated with the creation, testing, and use of nuclear weapons. The astronomical sums currently being spent to create new weapons instead of addressing the pressing needs of our communities is further evidence of injustice. So while we confront the ever-present threat of nuclear annihilation, we must also work together to address these other intersecting problems.

**Build and strengthen relationships with local groups working on critical social issues.** We encourage you to connect with other groups early in your efforts, and to be creative in how you connect nuclear weapons to the issues they care about.

For example, you could make the link between police brutality in your city and militarism at the federal and international levels. Or you could link nuclear weapons to climate justice by arguing how, instead of investing billions in nuclear weapons that threaten

communities and do not make us safer, we could invest these funds in initiatives that strengthen communities and address climate change, such as expanding clean energy infrastructure or electrifying public transportation. It is also important for those of us committed to social justice to “show up” for other communities in myriad ways: by attending their meetings, offering them opportunities to bring their issues to your networks, and helping to advocate when these issues come before local and state government.

**Ask groups to officially endorse Back from the Brink.** More than 350 already have—who can you ask? Your faith community, an advocacy group, or a university department are just some examples of local groups who might be interested. See p. 4 for some sample email language to guide you. Try growing your existing relationships and reaching out to new groups to forge lasting, mutually beneficial partnerships.

## Pass a Resolution in Your Local Government

The cornerstone of the Back from the Brink campaign is the municipal resolutions passed in cities and towns throughout the United States by our distributed network of organizers. More than 50 municipalities and states have passed Back from the Brink resolutions or proclamations already, with many more in progress. And we need your help to keep the momentum going.

**Learn the ins and outs of your local government.** Who are the elected officials that represent you? What is the process for passing a resolution or proclamation?

**Start organizing!** Work with others in your community to draft a resolution, gather support, and pass it into law. Check out these [Back from the Brink Advocacy Tools](#) for more information and, as always, we encourage you to reach out to us for support. Contact Madison at [MArnoldScerbo@ucsusa.org](mailto:MArnoldScerbo@ucsusa.org) with questions about the campaign or to get advice on how to maximize the impact of your advocacy and community organizing.

## Sample Email Asking Organizations to Endorse Back from the Brink

*Instructions: for the letters that follow, copy and paste the letter text into a new email, replacing the bracketed text with your relevant information. You can also download these letters in Microsoft Word format at [www.preventnuclearwar.org/advocacy-tools](http://www.preventnuclearwar.org/advocacy-tools) (click on “sample request”).*

Dear [NAME OF ORGANIZATION],

I'm writing to ask [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] to endorse an important and exciting grassroots campaign called **Back from the Brink: The Call to Prevent Nuclear War**.

To date, more than 350 health, environmental, academic, peace, faith, and justice organizations have endorsed Back from the Brink, and numerous municipalities and states have adopted resolutions supporting its policy solutions. The full list of endorsements is at [www.preventnuclearwar.org/whos-on-board](http://www.preventnuclearwar.org/whos-on-board).

Nuclear weapons don't make us safer, yet the Pentagon is planning to rebuild the entire US arsenal at the staggering cost of up to \$2 trillion—diverting resources away from our communities at a time when so many people are struggling.

Furthermore, nuclear weapons intersect with the most critical issues of our time: climate change and environmental and racial justice. Rising temperatures and extreme weather are already causing resource scarcity, forced migration, political instability, and increased conflict, making nuclear war more likely. And the US nuclear weapons complex has had disproportionate impacts on communities of color, from uranium mining on Indigenous land to explosive testing in the Pacific and the desert Southwest.

The Back from the Brink campaign calls on the United States to lead a global effort to prevent nuclear war by:

- 1) renouncing the option of using nuclear weapons first;
- 2) ending the sole, unchecked authority of any president to launch a nuclear attack;
- 3) taking US nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert;
- 4) canceling the plan to replace its entire arsenal with enhanced weapons; and
- 5) actively pursuing a verifiable agreement among nuclear-armed states to eliminate their nuclear arsenals.

Several of these policy proposals are already in legislation currently before Congress, but grassroots support is critically needed to move them forward.

Visit [www.preventnuclearwar.org/endorse](http://www.preventnuclearwar.org/endorse) to endorse Back from the Brink and learn about further opportunities to take action. Together, we can create a safer, healthier, and more just world.

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME, HOMETOWN, AFFILIATIONS]

## Sample Email Asking Elected Officials to Endorse Back from the Brink

Dear [NAME OF ELECTED OFFICIAL],

I'm writing as a constituent to ask you to join many other municipalities and organizations in endorsing **Back from the Brink: The Call to Prevent Nuclear War**, a set of five commonsense, practical policy solutions that would greatly reduce the risks posed by nuclear weapons.

Started by two prominent national organizations, Physicians for Social Responsibility and the Union of Concerned Scientists, Back from the Brink seeks to build broad public and congressional support for fundamental changes in US nuclear weapons policy.

As [TITLE OF OFFICE], endorsing Back from the Brink is a simple way to lend your voice and stature on an issue that affects every one of your constituents.

This is not a partisan issue. Global tensions have been rising, and the use of even a small number of today's nuclear weapons—which are far more destructive than those used in 1945—could have catastrophic global consequences. As [TITLE OF OFFICE], you have a solemn duty to keep your constituents safe, and nuclear weapons should be no exception. **In that regard we hope you will not only endorse Back from the Brink but also issue a public statement to our local/state media and inform our congressional delegation of your support.**

Nuclear weapons don't make us safer, and the enormous sums of money we spend to build and maintain them makes it more difficult to fund critical social, economic, and environmental programs. Back from the Brink therefore seeks to put a stop to the Pentagon's plan to rebuild the entire US nuclear arsenal at the staggering cost of up to \$2 trillion. We also seek to minimize the threat of accidental nuclear war by ending the US president's sole authority to order the use of nuclear weapons, and taking US nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert.

Your endorsement of Back from the Brink is a simple step that will send a powerful signal to members of our congressional delegation and other leaders in Washington, DC, that it's time to fundamentally change the way we think about nuclear weapons. **Please formally endorse the Back from the Brink campaign here: [www.preventnuclearwar.org/organizations-municipalities-endorsement-form/](http://www.preventnuclearwar.org/organizations-municipalities-endorsement-form/).**

More information can be found at [www.preventnuclearwar.org](http://www.preventnuclearwar.org). Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
[YOUR NAME, HOMETOWN, AFFILIATIONS]

[www.ucsusa.org/resources/bftb-toolkit](http://www.ucsusa.org/resources/bftb-toolkit)

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*The Union of Concerned Scientists puts rigorous, independent science to work to solve our planet's most pressing problems. Joining with people across the country, we combine technical analysis and effective advocacy to create innovative, practical solutions for a healthy, safe, and sustainable future.*

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*Back from the Brink: The Call to Prevent Nuclear War is a national grassroots campaign seeking to fundamentally change US nuclear weapons policy and lead us away from the dangerous path we are on. The initiative lays out five common-sense steps that the United States should take to reform its nuclear policy.*