

U.S. PIRG

Standing Up To Powerful Interests

United States Public Interest Research Group
Citizen Agenda: An Update For Members Of U.S. PIRG

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Find links to resources and actions at www.uspirg.org

U.S. PIRG Education Fund

Healthy Living

Sounding The Alarm On Antibiotics

Antibiotic overuse in any setting breeds deadly, antibiotic-resistant bacteria that put public health at risk.

Alarmed by the fact that 70 percent of medically important antibiotics in the U.S. are used on livestock and poultry—not humans—doctors and nurses are coming forward to raise the alarm about the misuse of our life-saving medicines in agriculture.

To make sure elected and corporate decision-makers hear from these experts about antibiotic resistance and what can be done to stop it, U.S. PIRG Education Fund created the Health Professional Action Network.

Already, more than 40,000 health professionals have signed on, and a group of doctors worked with us this summer to produce a video interview series about antibiotic resistance that is reaching thousands online.

450,000 Doors In 18 States

With your support, we're spreading the word one household at a time. In July, U.S. PIRG and our national network kicked off a summer public education drive in 18 states.

By summer's end, our organizers knocked on more than 450,000 doors across the country, mobilizing nearly 80,000 citizens to join our campaign calling on McDonald's to stop misusing human antibiotics in its supply chain.

As the biggest purchaser of beef in the country, a strong commitment from McDonald's could change the entire food industry and save lives.

Citizen support also gives us the resources we need to advocate directly in the halls of power. In June, we joined other groups in support of a federal bill to enforce duration limits on antibiotics given to livestock, just like we require in human medicine.

Together with you, we'll keep working at the state, national and corporate levels to protect the health of future generations. ■



DOCTORS ARE SPEAKING OUT—Dr. Marty Makary from The Johns Hopkins Hospital points to the overuse of antibiotics in agriculture as a major contributor to deadly, antibiotic-resistant infections in a July video interview from U.S. PIRG Education Fund.

Product Safety

Stores Stop Selling Deadly Paint Strippers

There are more than 80,000 chemicals on the U.S. market, many of which were never tested for their health impacts.

Drew Wynne's parents saw the tragic consequences firsthand when their son died from using a paint stripper containing methylene chloride. After hearing Drew's story in May, our national network joined a coalition effort to get dangerous paint strippers off store shelves.

First, we sent Lowe's 7,000 petition signatures, urging them to drop these deadly products. Lowe's listened, announcing it would do so before 2019. Next, we focused on Home Depot. After receiving thousands of comments, the retailer also announced plans to phase out these paint strippers.

With supporters like you by our side, U.S. PIRG will continue protecting consumers from toxic threats hidden in plain sight. ■

Member Resources

Read the latest news and sign up for email alerts on our public health and consumer campaigns at:

www.uspirg.org



New Economy

Right To Repair Is The Fix We Need

If a product you own breaks, you should be able to fix it or find someone who can. But products ranging from dishwashers to smartphones are purposefully made to be difficult, if not impossible, to repair.



Ricky Osborne

REPAIR SHOULD BE EASIER—U.S. PIRG Right to Repair Campaign Director Nathan Proctor (right) was joined by e-waste recycler Eric Lundgren in June to deliver more than 11,000 petitions calling on Microsoft to make it easier for consumers to repair their products.

“While companies profit, the public is forced to pay the price in financial costs and environmental damage,” said Nathan Proctor, director of U.S. PIRG’s campaign for the Right to Repair.

When Microsoft pressed criminal charges against e-waste recycler Eric Lundgren for copying restore disks that allow people to fix old computers—even though the software on those disks is available online for free—we launched an effort to urge Microsoft to work with recyclers, not penalize them.

Our national network is supporting Right to Repair reforms in 18 states, because it shouldn’t be this difficult to keep our products away from the trash heap. ■

Consumer Defense

Defending The CFPB

U.S. PIRG’s national advocates have been hard at work urging lawmakers to pass a budget that doesn’t dismantle the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

On July 21, the Consumer Bureau celebrated a bittersweet seventh birthday. While Congress was making various anti-consumer moves, more than 100 groups joined U.S. PIRG Education Fund in sending consumers a message of hope.

In a video, U.S. PIRG Education Fund’s Mike Litt criticized the slowdown in consumer protections at the Consumer Bureau—but said the ability of the agency to protect consumers is largely still intact, thanks to our advocates, members and allies.

“As long as consumers keep speaking up, a future CFPB director will be able to ensure a fair and transparent marketplace for consumers and businesses alike,” said Litt. ■

Zero Out Toxics

Companies Move Toward Toxic-Free Products

For Mother’s Day this year, U.S. PIRG and our national network sent more than 6,000 petition signatures to L’Oréal—the manufacturer behind brands like Garnier and Maybelline—urging the company to disclose the fragrance chemicals used in its products.

More than 3,000 chemicals can be used to make fragrance—some of which have been linked to cancer and reproductive and respiratory problems. Just weeks after our petition delivery, L’Oréal announced it would make this disclosure.

In July, we scored another victory when Johnson & Johnson agreed to disclose fragrance ingredients in its baby products.

“We’re seeing a shift in the personal care products industry toward greater transparency,” said U.S. PIRG’s Dev Gowda, director of our campaign for toxic-free products. “Consumers are demanding it, and the industry is starting to listen.” ■

21st Century Transportation

Fix It First, Then Build For The Future

Nine highway projects across the country—slated to cost \$30 billion—exemplify the need for a fresh approach to transportation planning and spending, according to U.S. PIRG Education Fund’s fourth annual “Highway Boondogles” report.

Released in June, the report explores projects from Maryland’s \$9 billion “Traffic Relief Plan” to Texas’ \$8.1 billion Interstate 35 expansion—projects that would do little to address congestion while diverting funding from repairs and 21st-century transportation priorities.

“The money we spend today decides how we get around tomorrow,” said Matt Casale, U.S. PIRG’s transportation program director. “We need to avoid the type of highway projects that should be in our rearview mirror.” ■

An advertisement for Green Century Funds. It features a young girl in a green dress standing in a field with wind turbines in the background. The text reads: "Invest fossil fuel free. Because her future matters." Below this, it says: "Download our guide to get started at www.greencentury.com/myguide". The Green Century Funds logo is also present. At the bottom, there is a disclaimer: "Investments in mutual funds carry risks and investors may lose principal value. You should carefully consider the Funds' investment objectives, risks, charges, and expenses before investing. To obtain a Prospectus that contains this and other information about the Funds, please visit www.greencentury.com, email info@greencentury.com, or call 1-800-934-7336. Please read the Prospectus carefully before investing. Distributor: UMB Distribution Services, LLC. 8/18".

Protecting Consumers In The Digital Age

Why do we let companies like Facebook and Equifax, who have done so much to advance digital technology, be so careless with our personal information? And why are we doing so little to hold them accountable when they make a mistake, or allow identity thieves to access our personal information?

These questions drive our national network's efforts to implement better consumer protections and privacy laws across the country—work that is only possible thanks to members and supporters like you.

At the national level, while U.S. PIRG and our network are excited to see bipartisan action for free credit freezes—an important protection that was included in a bill passed in May—the new federal law unfortunately preempts stronger state laws.

As our advocates told The New York Times, this law could undermine consumer protections that our affiliate groups helped establish in Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Oregon and Washington over the past year.

With support from our members, we will keep encouraging consumers to use credit freezes to protect themselves, and continue looking for new opportunities to push for stronger protections against identity theft.

Progress In The States

U.S. PIRG has also made important progress on data privacy at the state level—where protections can often lay the groundwork for federal action.

In California, our national network teamed up with the Consumer Attorneys of California to prevent future data breaches and make sure negligent companies can be held accountable. Together, we co-sponsored Senate Bill 1121 to make clear that consumers should have a private right to sue when a breach occurs.

Despite strong industry opposition, this policy was ultimately adopted as part of the California Consumer Privacy Act, which acts as a model for strong consumer protections in other states.

Permission To Use Our Data

To bring current privacy laws up to date with our digital world, U.S. PIRG is recommending Congress pass a privacy bill of rights similar to the General Data Protection Regulation, a new privacy law that went into effect in the European Union in May.

“A cornerstone of the new European law is the requirement to obtain permission from consumers before their data can be used. In



Jonathan Comer

YOUR ADVOCATE IN CONGRESS—U.S. PIRG Consumer Campaign Director Mike Litt testifies before the House Financial Services Committee on the Equifax breach and data privacy laws.

order to guarantee privacy from companies, Congress should pass legislation that requires permission from American consumers too,” said U.S. PIRG’s Mike Litt. ■

Thanks To You



Dear U.S. PIRG member,

It's terrifying, but simple: If we continue misusing antibiotics, common infections could become a lot more deadly.

In July, U.S. PIRG and our national network kicked off efforts to knock on 450,000 doors to educate people across the country about the overuse of our life-saving antibiotics in agriculture.

So far, tens of thousands have signed our petition asking McDonald's to only buy beef and pork from farms that use antibiotics responsibly. By summer's end, that number will have climbed to nearly 80,000, adding the power of consumer opinion to our research and advocacy.

Sure, there are food industry interests, as well as the power of “that's just the way the world works,” standing in the way of solutions. But U.S. PIRG stands for two different forces: the idea that there's a public interest—a position that benefits all of us—and the idea that change is always possible.

This approach, combined with support from members like you, has helped us convince some of the country's top restaurants to phase antibiotics out of their supply chains, and we hope McDonald's will soon do the same.

From addressing antibiotic resistance, to protecting consumers in the financial marketplace, to getting toxic products off store shelves, we stand up for you—but we couldn't do it without you.

Thank you,

Faye Park, U.S. PIRG President
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Solid Waste

It's Time To Stop Trashing Our Future

Nothing we use for a few minutes should threaten our health or pollute our future for hundreds of years—especially when we don't need it.

But polystyrene foam, the stuff most of us call Styrofoam, persists in the environment for centuries—meaning every bit of it ever made is still out there clogging our landfills, littering our streets, and polluting our parks, rivers and oceans.

U.S. PIRG supporters like you have already sent tens of thousands of comments asking state lawmakers to eliminate polystyrene cups and containers for good, but we're just getting started.

If we're successful in banning single-use polystyrene items, we'll be moving one step



Staff

WE HAVE A TRASH PROBLEM—*This summer, our national network held beach cleanup events, like the one pictured above in Maryland, to raise awareness about plastic pollution and spur action at the local and state levels.*

closer to zero waste. We'll see cleaner parks, streets and beaches, less overall waste choking our planet, and a more sustainable future to leave to our children and grandchildren. This is something we can do right now, with your support. ■

U.S. PIRG

U.S. PIRG's Mission

When consumers are cheated or the voices of ordinary citizens are drowned out by special interest lobbyists, U.S. PIRG speaks up and takes action. We uncover threats to public health and well-being and fight to end them, using the time-tested tools of investigative research, media exposés, grassroots organizing, advocacy and litigation. U.S. PIRG's mission is to deliver persistent, results-oriented public interest activism that protects consumers, encourages a fair, sustainable economy, and fosters responsive, democratic government.

Citizen Agenda Credits

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