

2022 ANNUAL REPORT



ACTION IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

Illinois PIRG

Children's Hospital of Chicago

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Ann & Robert H. Lurie
Children's Hospital of Chicago®

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DEAR MEMBER

The efforts of Illinois PIRG staff, members and friends in the past year resulted in the reduction of plastic pollution, prevention of toxic threats to our health, and stronger protections for consumers. In this report, you can learn more about the research, advocacy and grassroots action that make a positive difference in people's lives on these issues and many others.

It's a mission that we carry out in political climate too often characterized by mutual disrespect and negativity. A frustrating stalemate is always a possible outcome. Yet every day we still find opportunities to do good—to bring people together, find common ground, and solve problems that affect all of us. We're grateful to each of our members, volunteers, donors, friends and supporters like you, who make it possible for us to do all we can to advance the public interest. It is truly our privilege to get to do this work together.



Abe Scarr
State Director

MEMBER SPOTLIGHTS



“I pledged my support to PIRG 30 years ago or so because I want my children and grandchildren to have the benefits of clean air, water and overall environment. I see daily reminders of how much damage we have done and know that fixing that damage starts with me.”

Matt C.V., Member

“PIRG keeps me informed. A variety of topics are covered from individual changes I can make to larger government issues that I can at least sign letters of concern. I greatly appreciate PIRG for fighting for a safer, healthier world.”

Helen M., Member

Photos: (Cover) Outside Peoples Gas headquarters in Chicago, Illinois PIRG's Abe Scarr rallies residents in opposition to the largest gas utility rate hike in state history. (Left) Illinois PIRG State Director Abe Scarr alerts the public to unsafe toys. Credits: (Cover) Staff. (Left) Lurie Children's Hospital (Above) Photo courtesy of Matt C.V.

ACTION IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST
BEYOND PLASTIC



We urged companies to reduce plastic

Many of us are trying to reduce our plastic use, but it's difficult when practically everything comes packaged in plastic. Through our Beyond Plastic campaign, PIRG supporters sent more than 70,000 petitions to Whole Foods, Costco, Amazon and General Mills in 2022, urging them to take single-use plastic packaging off their shelves. And in September, General Mills' shareholders passed a resolution telling the company to reduce its use of plastic packaging.

Our staff and supporters also built support for producer responsibility laws, which will hold plastic packaging producers financially responsible for dealing with the waste their products create. Four states have passed such laws. Illinois should, too.



Photos: (Above) PIRG's Beyond Plastic team shined a spotlight on the problem of plastic waste in the media, while our coalition partners released a scorecard ranking corporations on their plastics policies. Credits: (Left) STEKLO via Shutterstock. (Above, clockwise) Staff; Yazan Aboushi; As You Sow.

ACTION IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST
RIGHT TO REPAIR



We helped unite consumers, farmers and businesses

What unites consumers, farmers, repair shop owners and hospital administrators? We all just want to be able to fix our stuff.

Our coalition delivered this message to lawmakers, urging passage of state Rep. Michelle Mussman's Right to Repair bill. Our research found reforms could save families \$1.6 billion per year, decrease the 429,000 tons of electronic waste generated annually by Illinois households, and allow hospitals to more quickly fix critical medical equipment. The bill didn't pass, but the message broke through. Companies from Apple to John Deere have taken steps to allow customers greater access to replacement parts, tools and repair manuals.



Photos: (Left) Nathan Proctor, senior director of PIRG's Right to Repair campaign. (Above, top and left) Illinois PIRG and our allies called for greater scrutiny of John Deere over obstacles to repair. (Right) PIRG's Kevin O'Reilly has worked to rally farmers behind the Right to Repair. Credits: (Left) Leise Jones Photography. (Above, from top) Michael Lim, Willie Cade.

ACTION IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

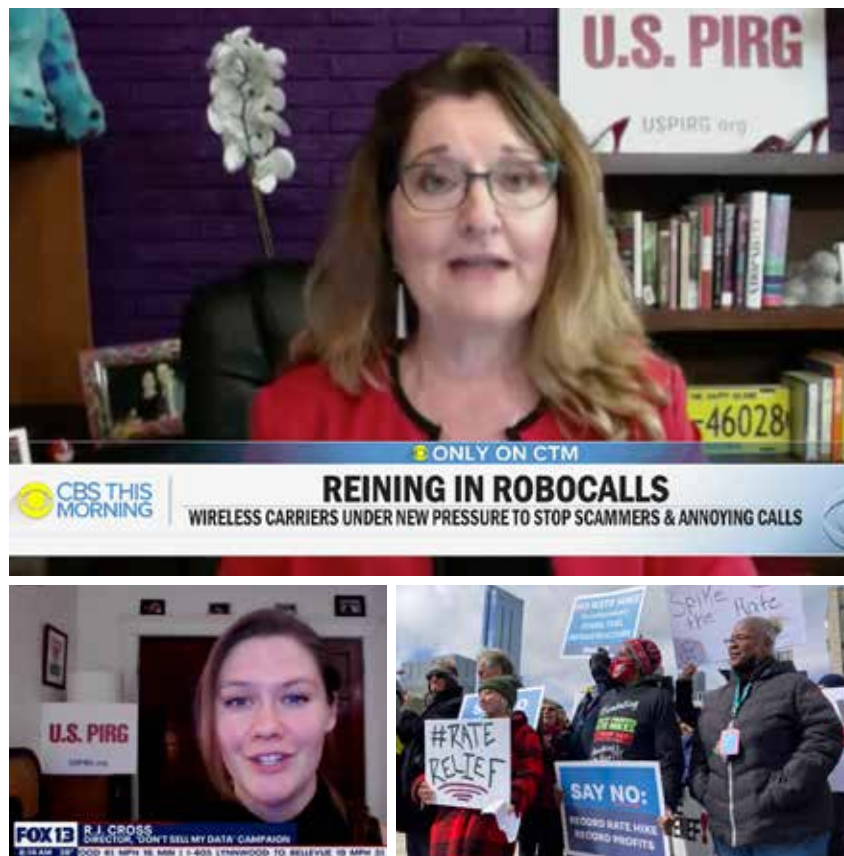
CONSUMER PROTECTION



We held Peoples Gas, auto insurers, others to account

Illinois PIRG has been a sharp critic of a 2013 state law that guarantees profits yet minimizes oversight for certain gas utility programs. In 2022, our research documented that Peoples Gas customers paid nearly an extra \$15 per month for a pipe replacement program marred by high costs, waste and inefficiency—evidence of the 2013 law’s negative consequences for consumers.

Meanwhile, auto insurers reaped extra profits as drivers stayed off the road during the pandemic’s first year, while refunds failed to keep up. Together with Consumer Federation of America, we showed that the companies shortchanged drivers by \$29 billion—an average of \$125 per vehicle.



Photos: (Left) Illinois PIRG staff oppose a proposed utility rate hike by gas utility Peoples Gas. (Above) PIRG’s Teresa Murray alerts the public to consumer threats, while PIRG’s R.J. Cross helps consumers protect their data. Outside Peoples Gas headquarters in Chicago, residents rally in opposition to the largest gas utility rate hike in state history. Credits: (Left) Staff. (Above) CBS, Staff, Fox 13.

MORE ACTION IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

STOP THE OVERUSE OF ANTIBIOTICS



Robert Banez

In October, a report from our research partner U.S. PIRG Education Fund found that most grocery chains reviewed failed to address antibiotics overuse. PIRG supporters sent more than 17,000 petitions to Trader Joe's, urging the grocer to eliminate the routine use of antibiotics in its private-label meat supply.

PIRG CONSUMER WATCHDOG



twinquinn84 via Pixabay

In May, President Biden signed the PIRG-backed Safe Sleep for Babies Act into law to ban infant sleepers due to the risk of suffocation. And the 2022 edition of the "Trouble In Toyland" report warned parents about the risks of smart toys that gather children's data, increasing the chances that it will be exposed in a hack.

SAFER STOVES HEALTHIER HOMES



Staff

As evidence mounted that gas stove pollution is toxic to our health, PIRG worked to get Americans the information they need to keep their families safe. Our supporters sent 5,000 petitions urging Best Buy to inform its customers about the risks, and we got the word out through events and in media.

ELECTRIC BUSES ILLINOIS



Ricky Mackie Photography

Illinois announced in May that it will help school districts replace diesel buses with electric buses. PIRG pushed Volkswagen to agree in 2016 to a \$14.7 billion settlement over a diesel emission test-cheating scandal and, in 2018, spurred Illinois to improve its original plan for spending its share of the money.

HIGH+VALUE HEALTH CARE



Washington Journal/CSPAN

After winning the federal No Surprises Act, PIRG's Patricia Kelmar worked to make sure that the final rules implemented were as strong as possible in 2022. PIRG urged the Biden administration to stand firm to protect patients and avoid accelerating the rise of health care costs.

GET THE LEAD OUT



Ixepop via Shutterstock

In April, U.S. PIRG Education Fund released an interactive map confirming widespread lead contamination of school drinking water. In states with the most data, half of all schools tested contained at least one lead-contaminated tap. PIRG staff and supporters urged officials to quickly get the lead out.

50 YEARS OF ACTION & RESULTS

Illinois PIRG is part of a federation of independent, state-based, citizen funded Public Interest Research Groups. Together, we have a long legacy of victories in the public interest—including state and local wins that have provided blueprints for action nationwide.

1971: First PIRGs founded

Students start the first college campus chapters of Minnesota PIRG, Missouri PIRG and Oregon Student PIRG. PIRGs form in 20 more states over the next decade, and U.S. PIRG is founded in 1983.

1982: MASSPIRG saves the Bottle Bill

After winning a 9-year campaign to pass the Bottle Bill, MASSPIRG faced a new challenge: an industry attempt to repeal it. More than 8,000 citizen volunteers got to work, ultimately helping to defeat the repeal with a convincing 59% of the vote.



1984: PIRG hits student voter registration milestone

PIRG's newly launched National Student Campaign for Voter Registration registers 750,000 student voters in its first year, increasing the registration of 18- to 24-year-old voters by 17%.

1986: PIRG wins drinking water protections

PIRG plays a key role in passing strong new federal Safe Drinking Water Act amendments to better protect groundwater sources of drinking water and increase the pace at which contaminants are regulated.

1989: 'Trouble in Toyland' report sparks action

PIRG's first annual "Trouble in Toyland" report is released, warning parents of the hidden dangers of certain toys on the market. U.S. PIRG Education Fund has since published 36 other reports, resulting in more than 150 recalls.

1989: MASSPIRG wins law to reduce toxics

MASSPIRG authors and wins the passage of the Toxics Use Reduction Act, requiring industries to publicly disclose their use of toxic chemicals for the first time and plan for future reductions.



Photos: (Above, left to right) MASSPIRG's Mindy Lubber and Doug Phelps promote the Massachusetts Bottle Bill in 1981; PIRG's Lucinda Sikes speaks to the media about toy safety; Tufts University students show support for Massachusetts' hazardous waste initiative. Credits: Staff; staff; staff.



Five decades ago, groups of college students began investigating problems from shady business practices to illegal pollution. They called themselves PIRG—Public Interest Research Groups. Illinois PIRG and the PIRG network are celebrating 50 years of action for a change.



1998: PIRG wins reduction of pesticides in schools

CALPIRG, MASSPIRG and Maryland PIRG help win a series of laws to reduce the use of pesticides linked to cancer and other serious health problems in public schools throughout the 1990s and early 2000s.

2010: PIRG helps create CFPB

PIRG co-founds a coalition that, alongside U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren, wins the creation of the federal Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB). Since opening its doors in 2011, the CFPB has helped return \$16 billion in relief for consumers.

2012: PIRG helps win national clean car standards

Following years of advocacy by the state PIRGs, the Obama administration implements new national clean car standards calling for the average mile-per-gallon standard across the U.S. fleet of cars to hit 54.5 by 2025.

2014: California bans single-use plastic bags

After building support in cities and counties, CALPIRG helps pass the nation's first statewide ban on single-use plastic bags in California. Ten more states follow suit over the next decade.



2015: Tyson Foods announces antibiotics phase-out

PIRG helps convince the nation's largest poultry producer, Tyson Foods, to commit to no longer using medically important antibiotics in their chicken, paving the way for other corporations to follow suit.

2018: PIRG helps win free credit freezes for consumers

In the wake of several high profile data breaches, including at credit bureau Equifax, PIRG helps pass a federal bill ensuring access to free credit freezes for all consumers to help prevent damage from identify theft.

Photos: (Above, left to right) CALPIRG staff attorney Teri Olle shakes Gov. Gray Davis' hand after he signed the Healthy Schools Act into law; PIRG helped build a coalition across California to build voter support for Prop 67, which banned single-use plastic bags; PIRG's Sujatha Jahagirdar Bergen speaks about antibiotic resistance in 2014.
Credits: Staff; staff; Beverly Jensen Photography.



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to Repair

Matt Wellington
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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

“We need to support groups like PIRG who are keeping a close eye on what is happening (or not happening) legislatively and letting us know how to respond to harmful policies.”

Cathy J., Member

To see a full staff list and learn more about our campaigns, visit us online at IllinoisPIRG.org/about/team.