

Maryland PIRG

Standing Up To Powerful Interests

2015 Legislative Agenda

Maryland Public Interest Research Group
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OUR MISSION

The Maryland Public Interest Research Group (Maryland PIRG) is an advocate for the public interest.

When consumers are cheated or the voices of ordinary citizens are drowned out by special interest lobbyists, Maryland 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. Maryland PIRG's mission is to deliver persistent, result-oriented public interest activism that protects consumers, encourages a fair, sustainable economy, and fosters responsive, democratic government.

Healthy Kids, Healthy Maryland

Every day, our families are bombarded with toxic chemicals found in consumer products which are linked to cancer, asthma, learning disabilities, reproductive problems and other diseases.

Maryland PIRG supports policies that give consumers the right to know what is in consumer products and replace dangerous chemicals with safer alternatives including policies that:

- **Phase out BPA, Formaldehyde** or other toxic chemicals from consumer products.
- **Provide consumers with accessible health and safety information** about the presence of toxic chemicals used in everyday products.
- Encourage research, innovation, and education in the field of **green chemistry**.
- **Protect vulnerable populations**, like women of reproductive age, developing children and workers from being unwittingly exposed to toxic chemicals.

In addition to our legislative agenda, we do our best to send out timely updates on bills that we support or oppose. If you have questions about our stance on a bill please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank you for your dedicated service in the Maryland General Assembly. We look forward to working with you in 2015 and throughout the entire legislative cycle.

-Emily Scarr, Maryland PIRG Director

Reclaiming our Democracy

The influence of wealthy special interests in the funding of elections has eroded public trust in our political system and has discouraged civic participation.

Maryland PIRG supports policies that ensure that every citizen, regardless of wealth, has more or less equal opportunity to influence the actions of our government, including policies that:

- Force **political spending into the light of day**.
- Promote **democratic shareholder decision making in corporate campaign spending**.
- **Amplify the power of small donors** at the state and local level, such as recent legislation passed in Montgomery County to create a small donor matching program.
- **Help overturn the U.S. Supreme Court's Citizens United and McCutcheon** decisions which has unleashed unprecedented spending by a handful of millionaires and corporations in our elections.
- Encourage **participation in our elections** and ensures **all eligible citizens are able to vote**.

(Continue on reverse)

Stop the Overuse of Antibiotics

At least 23,000 Americans die every year from antibiotic-resistant bacteria. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention warns that the widespread overuse of antibiotics on factory farms is making them less effective and is serious threat to public health.

Maryland PIRG supports policies that **stop the overuse of antibiotics on factory farms** that raise chicken or beef by **banning the use of antibiotics on healthy animals**.

Sound Budget & Tax Policy

Maryland faces tough budget decisions this year. Maryland PIRG believes that Marylanders should have the right to know how our money is being spent, and that no company should be able to game the tax system to avoid paying what it legitimately owes. Unfortunately, multi-state corporations are able to use accounting tricks to avoid paying what they owe in Maryland, leaving individuals and small businesses to bear the brunt of the tax burden.

Maryland PIRG supports policies that:

- Encourages **transparency and accountability in public spending**.
- Eliminates **corporate tax-avoidance schemes**.

Smart Energy Solutions

Marylanders deserve access to safe, reliable, and affordable electricity service. By using energy more wisely and getting clean sources of energy plugged into the grid, Maryland can achieve its potential for a cleaner, safer, cheaper and more reliable energy future.

Maryland PIRG supports policies that:

- Protects and renews **funding for energy efficiency programs**.
- Protects ratepayers from **unnecessary rate hikes and poor service**.
- Protects ratepaying families and businesses from utility mergers that are not in the public interest.

Don't Trash Maryland

Our neighborhoods, highways, waterways and the Chesapeake Bay are littered with bottles, cans, and plastic bags. We burn, bury, or export more than 50% of our waste in Maryland. That means more leaky landfills, dirty air from incinerators, and more litter and litter cleanup costs.

Maryland PIRG supports waste policies that **reduce litter**, are **dedicated to the principle of reduce, reuse, recycle** and move our state toward **zero waste**, including policies that:

- Create a **container deposit program to increase recycling and reduce litter**.
- Hold **industry responsible for the waste they produce**.
- **Ban the use of single use plastic bags**.
- Promote **recycling, composting, and anaerobic digestion**.

Transit Not Traffic

Our transportation system should reflect and support the way we want to travel. Despite mounting evidence that Americans are seeking to shift away from driving, tax dollars continue to new and wider highways (like the proposed expansion of Indian Head Highway), instead of fixing existing roads and bridges, or making it easier for people to travel by public transit, biking and walking.

Maryland PIRG supports policies that:

- **Invest in transportation infrastructure** that creates more transportation choices, improves air quality and serves communities in need.
- Prioritize using road dollars on **repair and maintenance of our current aging infrastructure**.
- Invest in infrastructure that empowers Marylanders to travel by **rail, bus, bike, and on foot**, like the **proposed Red Line, Purple Line, extended bus service, and bike lanes**.