2022 PROGRAM REPORT

ACTION IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

PennPIRG

TO OUR SUPPORTERS

DEAR MEMBER

The efforts of 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 a nation divided, a 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.

Faye Park
President, PIRG

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) PIRG's Nathan Proctor speaks to the media about our Right to Repair campaign. (Left) PIRG President Faye Park strategizes with staff. Credits: (Cover) Leise Jones Photography. (Left) Staff. (Above) Photo courtesy of Matt C.V.

ACTION IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

BEYOND PLASTIC

We urged companies to reduce plastic

Many Americans are trying to reduce their plastic use, but it's difficult when nearly 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 phase out single-use plastic packaging. And in September, General Mills' shareholders passed a resolution telling the company to reduce its use of plastic packaging.

Our state partner groups also played a key role in winning producer responsibility laws in California and Colorado, which will hold plastic packaging producers responsible for dealing with the waste their products create.

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; Liam Louis, Elle Vignette Photography; As You Sow.

ACTION IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

TOXICS & PESTICIDES

We reduced toxic threats putting our health at risk

We celebrated the culmination of years of PIRG advocacy when the Pentagon announced in January 2023 that it would stop purchasing firefighting foams that contain PFAS (or per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances). PFAS have been linked to health issues including cancer, and these foams were a major source of drinking water contamination. PIRG supporters also helped send 48,000 petition signatures to Columbia Sportswear, urging the retailer to phase PFAS out of its products.

In addition, PIRG helped secure the reinstatement of the second of several "polluter pays" taxes on companies that discharge toxic waste, which will provide funding to clean up toxic "Superfund" sites around the country.

OUTDOOR APPAREL BRANDS

COMPANY	SAMPLE APPAREL BRANDS	GRADE
PATAGONIA INC.	PATAGONIA	B
VF CORPORATION	THE NORTH FACE, TIMBERLAND	D
L.L. BEAN	L.L. BEAN	D
COLUMBIA SPORTSWEAR	COLUMBIA, PRANA	F
REI	REI CO-OP	F
WOLVERINE WORLDWIDE	WOLVERINE, MERRELL	F
ACADEMY SPORTS AND OUTDOORS	ACADEMY SPORTS AND OUTDOORS, MAGELLAN OUTDOORS	F

Photos: (Left) PIRG's Deirdre Cummings announces the launch of our campaign to ban toxic PFAS chemicals at a press conference. (Above) A report card released by our research partners at U.S. PIRG Education Fund graded corporations on their PFAS policies, while staff on our Toxics team educated the public about PFAS in firefighting foam and other toxic threats. Credits: (Left) Leise Jones Photography. (Above, clockwise) Staff; Airman First Class Amber Powell; WCSC.

ACTION IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

CONSUMER PROTECTION

We defended consumers in the marketplace

In 2022, our Right to Repair campaign made it easier for Americans to fix their stuff. After U.S. PIRG Education Fund's reports gave Apple an "F" on smartphone repairability and exposed how John Deere restricts farmers' ability to repair their tractors, both companies announced they would make improvements.

Following a series of high-profile air travel debacles, PIRG provided tip guides to help travelers know their rights and understand how to get refunds for canceled flights.

And since the PIRG-backed No Surprises Act went into effect at the start of 2022, the new law is already preventing 1 million surprise medical bills every month.

Photos: (Left) PIRG Right to Repair Campaign Senior Director Nathan Proctor testifies before a congressional subcommittee for our right to repair the things we own. (Above) PIRG's Teresa Murray alerts the public to consumer threats, while PIRG's R.J. Cross helps consumers protect their data. Credits: (Left) Yazan Aboushi. (Above, clockwise) CBS; SynthEx via Shutterstock; 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 AMERICA

Ricky Mackie Photography

The PIRG-backed bipartisan infrastructure bill passed at the end of 2021 included $5 billion in funding for electric school buses over the next five years. In 2022, PIRG worked to raise awareness about this program and urged states to make full use of this funding to give kids a cleaner, healthier ride to school.

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

PennPIRG 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. PennPIRG 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.

PennPIRG

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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

"I've continued to support PIRG's work because I want to help to eliminate single-use plastics, protect the planet and save the bees, and address consumer protection issues."

Don Ewing, Member

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