Consumer Protection

Defend The Consumer Bureau

The Great Recession made it clear: We need a watchdog agency on Wall Street, devoted to creating and enforcing fair, clear and transparent rules to protect consumers.

That’s why we helped create the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau—to be our consumer cop on the financial beat. In just six years, it’s been a huge success, returning nearly $12 billion to more than 29 million people who were ripped off by companies that broke the law.

But with the Trump administration and some in Congress looking to weaken or eliminate the Consumer Bureau, Illinois PIRG sprang into action. With your support, we’re holding the line to defend the Consumer Bureau.

In June, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a massive package of cuts and rollbacks to financial protections for everyday people. We’re calling it the Wrong CHOICE Act, and if it becomes law, it would put our economy at risk and dismantle the Consumer Bureau as we know it.

Our Watchdog On Wall St.

That’s why we’re doing everything we can to stop this bill in the Senate. Already, we’ve generated more than 45,000 messages to senators from members like you asking them to defend the Consumer Bureau.

Ban Roundup

Calling On Communities To Ban Monsanto’s Roundup

Mounting scientific evidence has shown that the combination of chemicals in Monsanto’s Roundup can cause cancer and other serious health problems. These chemicals are even starting to show up in our food, air and water.

That’s why Illinois PIRG launched a campaign to ban Roundup unless and until independent research proves it’s safe. But Monsanto and others are doing everything they can to discourage decision makers from doing a full and honest assessment of the risks of Roundup. Monsanto has even “ghostwritten” studies affirming Roundup’s safety, asking scientists to “just sign their names” to the studies.

In the absence of federal action, cities and states must take the lead to protect our health and well-being. We were glad to see California add glyphosate to the state’s list of cancer-causing chemicals, and other cities across the country are already in the process of eliminating glyphosate from their public spaces. Now, we’re calling on more communities to follow their lead, and ban the use of Roundup.

Member Resources

THRIVING COMMUNITIES GUIDE

Read our report looking into 10 communities that have taken action to limit glyphosate use.

www.illinoispirg.org
Pledge To Be Toxic-Free

Finding Out What Is In Our Personal Care Products

Over the past year, your support has helped us make great strides in our efforts to get the makers of personal care product to either disclose or remove toxic ingredients from their products.

After Illinois PIRG helped push Procter & Gamble and Unilever to take steps to improve ingredient transparency, SC Johnson—maker of products like Glade—responded to our call for change. The company agreed to remove galaxolide, a toxic chemical associated with developmental problems, from its products.

Then for Mother’s Day, Illinois PIRG joined coalition partners to deliver more than 150,000 petitions to L’Oréal, calling on the company to remove chemicals of concern and disclose fragrance ingredients, which can include dangerous chemicals like phthalates and styrene.

Consumer Protection

Protecting Digital Privacy

Nearly everything we do in today’s digital world leaves behind a trail of information—like your name, address, social security number and even your precise physical movements throughout the day. This information is captured, mined and sometimes exploited, often without your knowledge.

Fortunately, in May the Illinois House of Representatives passed the Geolocation Privacy Protection Act, commonsense legislation to require companies that track your movements through apps or websites to explicitly ask for your permission first—not bury it in long terms of service.

Illinois PIRG also backed the Right to Know Act, which simply gives consumers the right to know what information a website or app is collecting about them, and who they are sharing it with. With your support, Illinois PIRG will continue working to protect consumers’ privacy online.

Toxics

EPA Head Ignores Science On Dangerous Insecticide

Crucial decisions that will affect our children’s health should rely on scientific evidence. But Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Scott Pruitt’s decision not to ban chlorpyrifos, an insecticide sprayed on the food we eat, ignored the EPA’s own scientists, who warned last year that chlorpyrifos is linked to brain and developmental damage in children.

For years, science has shown that chlorpyrifos is dangerous. In fact, the EPA banned the indoor use of the insecticide more than a decade ago. But it’s still used on food crops, and the EPA estimates that 90 percent of American women have unsafe levels of chlorpyrifos in their bloodstream. Alongside our members, Illinois PIRG is calling on the EPA to revisit its decision, and on Illinois and other states to ban chlorpyrifos.

Healthy Farms

Reducing Farms’ Reliance On Chemicals & Fertilizers

Today, Americans are interested in whether their food is sustainable, and whether the farming practices that produce it help or hurt our health and the environment. Yet we spend billions of tax dollars every year on subsidies that incentivize practices that require more and more chemicals, putting our food, drinking water and health at risk.

But many farmers and researchers agree we can grow as much food as we do now without relying so heavily on chemicals. Shouldn’t we invest in farming practices that grow the food we need and also protect our health and environment?

Illinois PIRG Education Fund is building a coalition of concerned citizens, farmers and health professionals. Together, we can convince our decision makers in Washington, D.C., that we need better farm policies—ones that support healthy farms and healthy families.
Democracy

Victory For Voters: Illinois Modernizes The Vote

In May, Illinoisans across the state had reason to celebrate when the Illinois General Assembly unanimously passed a bill that would implement automatic voter registration (AVR) in our state. In August, Gov. Bruce Rauner signed the bill into law.

Illinois PIRG and our coalition, Just Democracy Illinois, led the charge for two years to pass an AVR bill in our state, building bipartisan support in the legislature and rallying the public to call on our elected leaders to join states like Oregon and Georgia in implementing this crucial voting measure.

Members like you played a key role in this victory by both supporting the work of our organization and making your voices heard loud and clear in Springfield.

1 Million New Voters
AVR changes the voter registration at the Department of Motor Vehicles from an opt-in process to an opt-out process, where people are automatically registered unless they opt-out. The Illinois law goes further than most states by extending AVR to multiple state agencies.

After Oregon became the first state to fully implement AVR in 2016, they saw nearly 100,000 first time voters in the 2016 general election. The Illinois version of AVR could add more than 1 million eligible Illinois voters to the rolls, save taxpayers money, and clean up our voter lists to ensure the integrity of our elections.

Bipartisan Support Wins
We’re proud of the unanimous bipartisan support our coalition built for AVR, which, on top of other reforms we helped pass in recent years, is making Illinois a national leader in modernizing voter registration and elections. With your support, we will continue working with Just Democracy Illinois to make our democracy work for all Illinois residents.

“Every eligible citizen—Democrat, Republican or Independent—has the fundamental right to have his or her vote counted on Election Day,” said Abe Scarr, Illinois PIRG director. “We’ve found automatic voter registration could help protect that right by making registration more modern, accurate and secure.”

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Thanks To You
Dear Illinois PIRG member,

In the current moment, looking at the American scene feels like using a big cracked mirror. The events of the day emphasize the differences between Americans—between the people living on our coasts and the residents of the great center of our country, between different ethnic groups, between economic strata, between red and blue. But the problems we’re working on here at Illinois PIRG—the problems that your support helps us address—don’t respect those lines. They affect all of us. And the solutions we strive for would make all of our lives better.

We all need to know that antibiotics are going to be available for us if we’re facing a deadly infection. We all need to be assured that the world’s enormous financial institutions, with their seemingly endless power in the age of digital information, will be held to account for their actions when they endeavor to place profitability ahead of fair practices. We need to make our transportation system make sense, economically and environmentally. We need to evolve from a throwaway society to a reduce/reuse society, cutting way back on the stuff we “need” to begin with.

And we need to be able to look ahead with anticipation, not fear, to the potential for better lives in a safer, healthier world that makes wise use of its unparalleled resources—natural, intellectual and human.

Thanks for being a part of our community.

Abe Scarr, Director
info@illinoispirg.org
Stop The Overuse Of Antibiotics

More States & Restaurants Act On Antibiotics

Thanks to the support of our members, Illinois PIRG has been able to change the marketplace, shifting some of the country’s biggest restaurants—like McDonald’s, Subway and KFC—away from selling meat raised with the routine use of medically important antibiotics.

Now, other chains are responding to keep up with their competitors. We celebrated in June when we learned that Burger King, the fourth-largest restaurant chain in the United States, committed to no longer serve chicken raised on antibiotics important to human medicine by the end of 2018.

Action on this public health threat isn’t limited to the marketplace. Thanks in part to the hard work and leadership of our colleagues at Maryland PIRG, Maryland became the second state in the country (after California) to ban the routine use of antibiotics on livestock and poultry. This is a huge victory that was only possible thanks to our members laying the groundwork of support it took to win. Now, we’re calling on Illinois and other states to follow Maryland and California’s lead, and take action to stop the overuse of antibiotics.