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.

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.

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, Illinois PIRG will continue protecting consumers from toxic threats hidden in plain sight.
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.

"While companies profit, the public is forced to pay the price in financial costs and environmental damage," said Nathan Proctor, director of Illinois 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.

Illinois PIRG-backed Right to Repair legislation passed out of committee this spring. We will continue to pursue this bill when the Legislature reconvenes next year, because it shouldn’t be this difficult to keep our products out of the trash heap.

Consumer Defense

Defending The CFPB

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

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 Illinois 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 Illinois PIRG Education Fund’s fourth annual “Highway Boondoggles” 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, Illinois PIRG’s transportation program director. “We need to avoid the type of highway projects that should be in our rearview mirror.”

Zero Out Toxics

Companies Move Toward Toxic-Free Products

For Mother’s Day this year, Illinois 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.

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

Dear Illinois PIRG member,

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

In July, Illinois 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 Illinois 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,

Abe Scarr, State Director
info@illinoispirg.org
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.

Illinois 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 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.

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.