

# WISPIRG

## Standing Up To Powerful Interests

Wisconsin Public Interest Research Group  
Citizen Advocate: An Update For Members Of WISPIRG

Winter 2017 • Vol. 29, No. 3

Find links to resources and actions at [www.wispirg.org](http://www.wispirg.org)

### Stop The Overuse Of Antibiotics

## More Progress On Antibiotics

This fall in New York City, we came together to urge the United Nations (U.N.) to take strong action to stop the overuse of antibiotics on factory farms.

The U.N. held high-level meetings at their New York headquarters, where they called the growing antibiotics problem a “fundamental threat” to global health and safety.

Experts estimate that more than 700,000 people worldwide die from antibiotic-resistant infections each year—a number that could grow to 10 million globally by 2050.

### Your Voices Heard In NYC

Volunteers, members and staff drew attention to the topic by handing out educational information outside U.N. headquarters. Then, WISPIRG delivered a letter to the U.S. Delegation to the U.N., signed by leaders in the medical community and members of the public, pushing them to take international action.

Later that week, the U.N. General Assembly passed a declaration requiring countries to create action plans to address the global public health crisis of antibiotic resistance.

Members like you have already helped restaurants like McDonald’s, Subway and Wendy’s to stop serving meat raised on antibiotics. Now, after more than 350,000 of you

made your voices heard by urging KFC to stop overusing our life-saving medicines, we’re hopeful that KFC and other companies will hear your call to action.

WISPIRG is also calling on Olive Garden to join the others who have committed to stop the overuse of antibiotics in their supply chains. We’ve made some significant progress, and we’re looking forward to what we can achieve in the upcoming year. ■

### Pledge To Be Toxic-Free

## Protecting Our Families From Harmful Chemicals

Consumers like you are demanding that their personal care products are safe and non-toxic. That’s why WISPIRG launched a campaign to convince personal care companies like Procter & Gamble, Unilever and L’Oreal to Pledge to be Toxic-Free, and remove toxic chemicals from their products.

We’re exposed to dangerous chemicals in products we use daily, from shampoo to hand soap. These chemicals can disrupt developmental growth and hormones. But with your help we can phase these toxins out.



Austin Donohue

**DISHING OUT A NEW FUTURE**—Antibiotics Program Field Director Matt Wellington handed out educational information to hundreds of people outside the United Nations headquarters in New York City. A high-level meeting brought together experts to discuss the growing threat of the overuse of antibiotics on factory farms.

### Member Resources

**HELP SAVE OUR ANTIBIOTICS**  
Sign our petition calling on KFC to stop serving meat raised on routine antibiotics.  
[www.wispirg.org](http://www.wispirg.org)



### Trouble In Toyland

#### Thirty Years And Counting, Toy Safety A Top Concern

We should know if the toys we buy for our children and our families are safe—whether we buy them at stores or online. That’s why, for 31 years, WISPIRG Foundation has released the “Trouble in Toyland” report, looking at safety hazards including toxic toys, choking hazards and more to make sure your family has the resources they need to avoid dangerous toys.

Emma Brower



**SAFETY FIRST FOR TOYS**—Doctors and hospital staff joined our sister group CALPIRG Education Fund at the Children’s Hospital in Los Angeles, Calif., to release the report “Trouble in Toyland” while children played with safe toys.

We’ve seen more than 150 regulatory actions as a result of our reports. This year, our report included information about toys that have recently been recalled and toys that were recalled but are still available on popular shopping sites. With supporters like you by our side, WISPIRG Foundation looks forward to another 30 years of important work to keep toys safe for our families. ■

### Transportation

#### Taking Steps Toward Better Transportation

Last year, for the first time ever, the transportation sector overtook the electric power sector to become the largest source of carbon pollution

in the country. Approximately 60 percent of carbon emissions from transportation comes from light-duty vehicles, like the cars and trucks we drive every day.

That’s why last summer, WISPIRG, together with our friends at the National Resources Defense Council, submitted more than 80,000 public comments to call on the Obama administration to reduce carbon pollution from the nation’s transportation system, and promote cleaner and smarter options.

With help from our members, we can continue making different traveling methods more available and efficient, like bike sharing, walking and public transportation. ■

### Consumer Protection

#### Calling For An End To Deceiving Debt Traps

Payday loans can seem like a quick fix to cover costs, but too often they leave borrowers in a debt trap. These short-term loans create a cycle of debt with high interest rates and fees, often forcing them to choose between not paying for basic needs like food and medical expenses or taking out more loans.

This fall, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) proposed a rule to end payday debt traps. Alongside our national federation, WISPIRG organized more than 11,000 people, including members like you, to call on the CFPB to

make the rule even stronger, and truly end the debt trap. ■

### Consumer Protection

#### Top Grassroots Lobbyist, Seventh Year Running

For 35 years, WISPIRG Consumer Program Director Ed Mierzwinski has been a tireless advocate for consumers like you, having a hand in many consumer advocacy projects from the creation of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) to giving people access to free annual credit reports.

This fall, Ed was recognized for his efforts when he was named one of the top grassroots lobbyists in the country by *The Hill* for the seventh year in a row.

Big banks and Wall Street may have their lobbyists in the halls of power, but we have Ed. This was true when he had a front row seat to Congressional hearings on Wells Fargo’s fraud accounts scandal, and when he was quoted in multiple stories about the scandal.

Consumers are also reaping the rewards of his work to help create the CFPB—the agency has returned nearly \$12 billion in relief and refunds to consumers. Having a director like Ed Mierzwinski on our team at WISPIRG ensures that we’ll have the right people on the ground and in the room, ready to stand up for consumers like you. ■

An advertisement for Green Century Funds. It features a photograph of a young girl with her arms raised, sitting on the shoulders of an older man with a white beard. The text on the left reads: "Invest fossil fuel free. Because her future matters." The Green Century Funds logo is in the top right. At the bottom, it says "Get started at GreenCentury.com/myguide".

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# Big Money Still Dominates Election Spending

WISPIRG knows members like you deserve to have your voices heard, and with a new administration in Washington, D.C., we won't stop working to make important improvements to our election process.

Up through November 8th, we watched as Super PAC donors and the super wealthy pushed more than \$5 billion into the process, more than double the cost of the 2012 presidential elections. We've seen time and again what happens when big money gets a stronghold on processes that should belong to the people.

## Elections Should Be For The People, Not Big Money

In a recent WISPIRG Foundation report, "Outside Influence: Out-of-State Money in the 2016 Senate Elections," we raised serious questions about to whom elected officials are accountable—voters or wealthy special interests from out-of-state.

"Our elections should be about the voters making a decision on who they want to represent their voice in Congress," said Andre Delattre, executive director of U.S. PIRG Education Fund. "When three out of every four campaign dollars comes from out-of-state interests, you've got a real problem on your hands. Big money is an all of us problem and that's why millions of Americans have spoken out calling for a solution."

## Empowering Voters Across The Country

Polling has shown that a large majority of Americans, like you, believe that fundamental changes are needed to empower voters over large donors and special interests.

We saw this at the polls last year, when states like Washington, South Dakota and Maryland successful-

ly jumped on board to enact citizen-funded election reforms.

Empowering residents and voters over wealthy interests is within reach, and knowing we have our members to back us up gets us that much closer to ending big money in politics. From Maryland to Washington state, we know this is a top priority for people like you. That's why WISPIRG will continue to work toward a more democratic process for all. ■

## OUTSIDE INFLUENCE: Out-of-State Money in the 2016 Senate Elections

85%

Average share of money in swing senate races coming from out-of-state.

\$468M

Total disclosed out-of-state spending in senate races this cycle.

77%

Share of money in senate races nationwide coming from out-of-state.

Source: Outside Influence: Out-of-state Money in the 2016 Senate Elections

## Thanks To You



Dear WISPIRG member,

*A safe, healthy environment, effective consumer protections in our financial lives, a strong voice for citizens in our democracy—these aren't controversial ideas. They're the hallmarks of a great country.*

*But from consumer protection to a democracy of, by and for the people, many of our proudest achievements may soon be at risk.*

*We're ready to defend them. But we can only do that if we stand together.*

*That's why your support is so important. And in the weeks and months ahead, we'll face some of our toughest challenges yet.*

*How well we meet these challenges will decide whether the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau stays strong or exists at all, whether more companies agree to get antibiotics out of our food supply, and whether less of America's most popular herbicide, Roundup, shows up in our land, water and food.*

*Our work is only possible because of you. I'm looking forward to what we can achieve with members like you and all your support.*

Thanks for standing with us,

Peter Skopec, Director  
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\$468M

## Protecting Public Health

# It's Time To Ban Roundup

We shouldn't be worried that the grass our children play on or the food we eat is full of harmful chemicals. But as the use of the weed killer Roundup increases, the safety of our health and environment face an uncertain future. New research, including some done by the World Health Organization (WHO), has found that Monsanto's Roundup and other glyphosate-based herbicides could pose significant risks to human health in Wisconsin and across the country.

One study by the WHO linked glyphosate—the main chemical ingredient in Roundup—to cancer at high levels of exposure. However, Roundup is not just glyphosate, it's a cocktail of different chemicals and there's mounting evidence that this cocktail could be a dangerous one for our health. On top of that, Roundup has become the most widely-used agricultural



Mike Mozart via Flickr/CC BY 2.0

**BAN ROUNDUP NOW**—We're calling on the EPA to ban Roundup, to protect public health and the environment.

chemical in U.S. history, and it is showing up in our rivers and in our food supply. This is a staggering reality we need to change. But with members like you we can protect our families from Monsanto's dangerous herbicide. We're calling on the Environmental Protection Agency to ban Roundup unless and until it's proven safe. Visit [www.BanRoundupNow.org](http://www.BanRoundupNow.org) to learn more, and sign our petition to get the EPA to ban Roundup. ■

# WISPIRG

## WISPIRG's Mission

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

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Public Interest GRFX  
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Printed on recycled paper