



2019-2020 Legislative Agenda

Massachusetts Public Interest Research Group
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OUR MISSION

The Massachusetts Public Interest Research Group (MASSPIRG) is an advocate for the public interest. When consumers are cheated or the voices of ordinary citizens are drowned out by special interest lobbyists, MASSPIRG 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. MASSPIRG's mission is to deliver persistent, result-oriented public interest activism that protects consumers, encourages a fair, sustainable economy, and fosters responsive, democratic government.

Each legislative session, we choose several bills that represent public interest reforms and we work with the chief sponsors and cosponsors to promote them. Below please find selected state priorities from our legislative agenda for the 2019-20 session.

Getting to Zero Waste

Contact: Janet Domenitz, Executive Director, Janet.Domenitz@MASSPIRG.org

Our incinerators are spewing toxic pollution, and our landfills are overflowing and leaking. That's because we bury, burn or export more than half of our waste. But, of the waste that ends up in incinerators and landfills, most of it is recyclable, and a third of it is from excess packaging. MASSPIRG is fighting to get the Commonwealth on the path to a zero waste future and to ensure that state waste policy is dedicated to the principle of reduce, reuse, recycle.

Bill Title: An Act to Increase Container Recycling in the Commonwealth, S.1939 & H.2837
Lead Bill Sponsors: Senator Cynthia Creem and Representative Marjorie Decker

This bill sets a deadline for increasing the recycling rates for non-deposit containers. Currently, more than 70% of containers with a nickel deposit are recycled, as compared to 23% of containers without a deposit. If the recycling rate of non-deposit containers does not reach that of containers with a deposit by the year 2025, as evaluated by the Department of Environmental Protection, deposits on other containers such as water and juices would go into effect.

Bill Title: An Act Reducing Plastic Bag Pollution, H.771 & S.462
Lead Bill Sponsors: Representative Lori Ehrlich and Senator James Eldridge

Plastic bags litter our environment, choke marine animals, and waste millions of gallons of petroleum, one of their main ingredients. This bill would make Massachusetts the third state in the nation to pass a statewide ban of single use plastic grocery bags. The bill encourages the use of durable, reusable grocery bags, and has been passed in 89 cities and towns in Massachusetts including Boston.

Bill Title: An Act to Reduce Solid Waste, Increase Recycling and Generate Municipal Cost Savings, S.498 & H.798
Lead Bill Sponsors: Senator Jason Lewis and Representative Jonathan Hecht

This bill puts Massachusetts on the path to zero waste by establishing annual waste reduction targets, improving waste ban enforcement, expanding and improving analyses and oversight of waste programs and establishes a Zero Waste Fund from a surcharge on waste disposal to improve diversion and other waste reduction efforts under the state's Solid Waste Master Plan.

Bill Title: An Act Relative to the Digital Right to Repair, H.218 & S.107

Lead Bill Sponsors: Representative Claire Cronin and Senator Michael Brady

Massachusetts throws out more than 8,000 cell phones every day. We should keep our electronics working and out of landfills and incinerators, but the companies that make modern electronics, from phones to appliances to tractors, actively block access to what we need to fix things. That means more cost for consumers and more toxic electronic waste. The bill gives consumers and independent repair businesses access to the parts, tools, technical manuals, diagnostic software and firmware needed to keep electronics working.

Bill Title: An Act to Restrict the Use of Polystyrene, H.3502 & S.1205

Lead Sponsor: Representative Marjorie Decker and Senator Michael Barrett

For decades, we've known that one of the worst forms of plastic pollution is polystyrene foam—what most of us call Styrofoam. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that we produce more than 3 million tons of polystyrene every year, and Americans throw away an estimated 25 billion polystyrene cups every year, or about 82 cups per person. Polystyrene doesn't degrade and is not recyclable and as a result clogs our landfills, litters our streets, and pollutes our environment. This bill restricts the use of single use polystyrene containers.

Bill Title: An Act to Require Producer Responsibility for Collection, Reuse, and Recycling of Discarded Electronic Products, H.797

Lead Bill Sponsors: Representative Jonathan Hecht

This bill requires manufactures to pay for and collect e-waste recycling encouraging less toxic, more durable, and easier to recycle packaging and reduces costs to cities and towns.

Protecting Consumers

Contact: Deirdre Cummings, Legislative Director, DCummings@MASSPIRG.org

Our economy works for everyone when consumers are equal players in the market place. But all too often consumers are sold inferior or unsafe products or services, lose millions of dollars in hidden and excessive fees, or have their private information shared or sold among corporations or stolen by crime rings here and abroad.

Bill Title: An Act to Establish a Student Loan Bill of Rights S.160 & H.998

Lead Bill Sponsors: Senator Eric Lesser and Representative Natalie Higgins

Nearly two-thirds of Massachusetts students are graduating with debt to finance their education, yet few protections exist for these students. Many end up falling victim to unfair and predatory lending practices. This bill creates a "Bill of Rights" to protect students from predatory lending practices, it requires all loan servicers to be licensed by the state and establishes an ombudsman to assist student borrowers.

Bill Title: An Act to Protect Ratepayers, H.2807 & S.1933

Lead Bill Sponsor: Representative Jennifer Benson and Senator Jo Comerford

Over the past several years, the Department of Public Utilities has approved utility profit margins, known as the "return on equity", at levels significantly higher than neighboring states. These decisions cost consumers tens of millions of dollars in extra revenue and profits for each large electric and gas utility in the state. In addition, the DPU recently approved automatic annual distribution rate hikes for Eversource electric at a rate of 1.6% higher than inflation. This bill protects consumers by eliminating automatic annual rate hikes, and limits the return on equity to no more than the average of neighboring states saving hundreds of millions of dollars for ratepayers in Massachusetts.

Bill Title: An Act Relative to Energy Savings Efficiency (Energy SAVE), H.2832 & S.1986

Lead Bill Sponsors: Representative Josh Cutler and Senator Jason Lewis

The bill updates energy and water efficiency standards for common household and commercial appliances. Efficiency standards ensure that the products we purchase use less energy and water while preserving quality and affordability.

Bill Title: In opposition to: An Act further regulating business practices between motor vehicle dealers, manufacturers, and distributors, SB 179 & HB 262

Lead Bill Sponsors: Senator Marc Pacheco and Representative Daniel Hunt

MASSPIRG is working to defeat this bill backed by auto dealers which threatens public safety. Specifically, section 4 of this bill would roll back important consumer protections under existing state laws, and open the flood gates to the sale of unsafe and dangerous unrepaired recalled cars on our roadways.

Improving Transportation in the Commonwealth

Contact: Matt Casale, Staff Attorney, mcasale@masspirg.org

Our transportation system now accounts for 40 percent of the greenhouse gas emissions in Massachusetts, more than any other source. Boston has the worst traffic congestion in the nation according to [the Global Traffic Scorecard](#). Our state's roads, bridges and mass transit infrastructure are all lagging. If we want safe, modern and equitable transportation that meets our needs in the 21st century, we need to take action to invest in, reform, and modernize our transportation systems.

The Transportation and Climate Initiative (TCI); An Act to Advance Modern and Sustainable Solutions for Transportation, H.3008 & S.2106

Lead Bill Sponsors: Representative Lori Ehrlich and Senator Eric Lessor

Transportation is now the top contributor of carbon pollution resulting in increased dirty air days, health risks and global warming. TCI is an opportunity to greatly reduce pollution and for Massachusetts to become a leader in climate action. We support the implementation of a strong TCI with a good cap and revenue going to investments in clean transportation.

Investment in the Regional Transit Authorities

Well-run, far reaching and sustainable public transportation is critical to the future of the Commonwealth. But the Regional Transit Authorities, which provide rapid transit service outside of the MBTA region, have been underfunded for years, preventing them from providing the fast, frequent and convenient public transportation system we need. We support funding the Regional Transit Authorities in the Fiscal Year 2020 budget with a base of \$90.5 million in state contract assistance and providing for a guaranteed annual increase in base funding of 2.5 percent. In addition to the in-state contract assistance, we support providing performance-based and discretionary funding designed to increase access, frequency and quality of service.

Bill Title: An Act Transitioning Massachusetts to Electric Buses, H.3121

Lead Bill Sponsor: Representative Dave Rogers

In order to avoid pollution of our air, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve the health and quality of life of Massachusetts residents, this bill would require that all transit and school buses in Massachusetts be electric by 2035.

Bill Title: An Act to Promote Zero- Emission Vehicle Fleets by 2035, S.1927

Lead Bill Sponsors: Senator Joe Boncore, Representatives Christine Barber and Jonathan Hecht

In addition to requiring the electrification of buses, this bill would require that all vehicles purchased or leased by the Commonwealth be zero-emissions by 2026. It would also require that privately-owned and operated passenger vehicles used in all or partial purpose for commercial ride-sharing and ride-hailing be zero-emissions by 2035.

Bill Title: An Act Relative to Regional Transportation Ballot Initiatives S.1694 & H.2535

Lead Bill Sponsors: Senator Eric Lesser, Representatives Jack Lewis and Andy Vargas

This bill would enable a municipality, or a group of municipalities as a district, to raise additional local money for transportation projects or operations via ballot initiatives. A supplement to other transportation revenue, these

funds would give voters a more direct role in the process and show a clearer correlation between revenue and investments. Tax surcharges could be imposed on sales, payroll, vehicle excise, or property. In states across the country, this is a common way to raise funds for transportation projects.

Bill Title: An Act relative to Variable Pricing E-Tolling, S.2033

Lead Bill Sponsors: Senator Joe Boncore

Traffic is a problem all across the Commonwealth, but is especially bad in Boston. Boston has the seventh worst traffic in the nation, and in 2017, traffic cost drivers over \$2,000 a year on average. This bill would implement a state-wide program for charging toll rates that are different depending on time of day, with the goal of relieving congestion for drivers. The program will be based on variable pricing, including a discount structure including off-peak discounts of at least 25 per cent and peak premiums of at most 25 per cent.

Bill Title: An Act to Reduce Traffic and Encourage Shared Rides, S.2063

Lead Bill Sponsors: Sen. Brendan Creighton and Reps. Jay Livingstone and Adrian Madaro

Recent research has shown that Transportation Network Companies (TNCs), like Uber and Lyft, lead to greater congestion on city streets. They put more cars on the street during rush hour, they are taking revenue away from the MBTA, and they're resulting in greater emissions in the Commonwealth. This bill raises a new fee on rides with TNCs in order to alleviate the costs associated with the additional road use resulting from TNCs and to raise revenue for public transportation.

Bill Title: An Act Relative to Contract Assistance for Central Artery Debt of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, H.3008

Lead Bill Sponsors: Representatives Sean Garballey

In 1990, when work started on the Big Dig, the Commonwealth entered into an agreement to build Boston area public transportation projects to mitigate pollution caused by this highway expansion project—the biggest in history. Adequate funding has never been appropriated, and as the MBTA took on new construction, it was saddled with debt it never should have had to assume. This legislation requires the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to pay the debt service obligations of the MBTA.

Bill Title: An Act to Explore Alternative Funding Sources to Ensure Safe and Reliable Transportation, H.3010

Lead Bill Sponsors: Representative Tricia Farley-Bouvier

The legislation establishes a voluntary vehicle miles traveled (VMT) pilot program to identify alternatives and supplements to the gas tax, and directs MassDOT to apply for federal funding that is available to administer the pilot program.

Reducing Toxic Chemicals

Contact: Janet Domenitz, Executive Director, Janet.domenitz@masspirg.org

Most chemicals are considered by our government regulators to be safe until proven otherwise. Approximately 80,000 chemicals are currently licensed for use, and yet the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that fewer than 10% of the industrial chemicals produced in the largest quantities (over one million pounds per year) have undergone even a limited set of tests to assess their health effects on humans. As part of the Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow, a statewide coalition working for reforms, MASSPIRG understands that the world cannot be “risk-free.” But we also know that there are safer alternatives to many toxic technologies and products in use today.

Bill Title: An Act to Protect Children, Families, and Firefighters from Harmful Flame Retardants, S.1230 & H.3500

Lead Bill Sponsor: Senator Cynthia Creem and Representative Marjorie Decker

Chemical fire retardants are common in consumer products including a variety of household items such as furniture, electronics, appliances, carpet pads and many baby products. Scientists have found that exposure to toxic

fire-retardant chemicals at critical points in development can damage the reproductive system and cause deficits in motor skills, learning, memory and behavior. Some are carcinogenic. Further, while these flame retardants pose a risk to our health, they don't provide a fire safety benefit. This bill phases out the use of 11 toxic flame retardants in children's products and residential furniture.

Bill Title: An Act Relative to Disclosure of Toxic Chemicals in Children's Products
Lead Bill Sponsors: Senator Cindy Friedman and Representative James Hawkins
S.149 & H.248

This bill promotes transparency by requiring the Toxics Use Reduction Program to create a list of toxic chemicals in consumer products. It requires manufacturers of children's products, personal care products, cleaning products and certain other products sold in Massachusetts that contain those chemicals to report that information to the state. The information will be made available to the public in a bi-annual report on the state's website.

Bill Title: An Act to Protect Massachusetts Pollinators, H.763
An Act protecting Pollinators by Eliminating Harmful Products, S.463
Lead Bill Sponsor: Representative Carolyn Dykema and Senator Jamie Eldridge

In recognition of the significant drop in the populations of honeybees and other native pollinators in recent years and the growing scientific consensus around the harmful effects of neonicotinoid pesticides, these bills would introduce common-sense limitations on unlicensed use of neonics.

Bill Title: An Act Relative to the Use of Glyphosate on Public Lands, S.499
Lead Bill Sponsor: Senator Jason Lewis

The World Health Organization has warned that the main ingredient in Monsanto's Roundup, glyphosate, is a probable human carcinogen. Despite the risks we spray 26 million pounds of Roundup on public parks, playgrounds, schools and gardens every year. And now studies are finding glyphosate in places it shouldn't be including cereals, beer, ice cream, and our bodies. This bill takes the first step to reduce exposure and use of Roundup by preventing the use of Round Up in our parks, schools and other public lands.

Bill Title: An Act to Ban the Use of PFAS in Food Packaging, H.3839
Lead Bill Sponsor: Representative Jack Lewis
Bill Title: An Act Relative to Chemicals in Food Packaging, S.1315
Lead Bill Sponsor: Senator Michael Moore

Polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a large group of approximately 5,000 man-made toxic chemicals PFAS chemicals. PFAS chemicals have been found in the majority of the population's blood and are present in our food supply due to leaching from food packaging. This bill would ban the manufacturing and use of PFAS chemicals in food packaging in Massachusetts.

Promoting Public Health & Safety

Contact: Deirdre Cummings, Legislative Director, DCummings@MASSPIRG.org

Lead is a potent neurotoxin that affects how our children develop, learn, and behave. Yet more than half of the 43,000 taps tested from 980 schools across Massachusetts from 2016-2018 tested positive for lead.

Bill Title: An Act Ensuring Safe Drinking Water in Schools H.774 & S.500
Lead Bill Sponsors: Representative Lori Ehrlich and Senator Joan Lovely

This bill protects children's health by getting the lead out of the water at all schools and child care centers requiring; the removal of lead service lines, the largest single source of lead in water; the installation of lead certified filters or water filling stations; and the testing of water at schools regularly. The bill establishes a health-based lead level standard for schools and day care centers of 1ppb and requires the immediate shut-off of outlets with elevated levels of lead.

The U.S. Surgeon General recently called e-cigarette use among America's youth an epidemic. Last year, e-cigarette use surged by nearly 80 percent, with one in five high schoolers reporting that they vaped. E-cigarettes almost always contain nicotine, an addictive drug that can impact brain development, memory and attention among adolescents. There is significant evidence that flavored vaping fluids attract and hook kids on tobacco. More than 80 percent of young e-cigarette users say they use the products because they "come in flavors I like."

Bill Title: An Act Regulating Flavored Tobacco Products, H.1902 & S.1279

Lead Bill Sponsors: Representative Danielle Gregoire and Senator John Keenan

This bill would prohibit the sale of any flavored tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, in Massachusetts anywhere except for age-restricted smoking bars.



Nuclear power is unsafe, too expensive, and alternatives for safer, sustainable energy abound. The one remaining power station in Massachusetts, Pilgrim Nuclear Power station, is slated to close in 2019, yet many questions remain regarding consumer safety and accountability from the station's owners. These bills address those issues.

Bill Title: An Act Relative to Community Radiological Emergency Response Funds, H.3492

Lead Bill Sponsors: Representatives Josh Cutler and Kathleen LaNatra

This bill requires nuclear power stations to maintain offsite radiological emergency plans and procedures post closure until the spent fuel pool is emptied. It also prohibits monies from any Decommissioning Trust Fund to be used to satisfy this obligation.

We must move toward 100 percent renewable energy for electricity, heating, and transportation, as quickly as possible to reduce global warming pollution, clean up our air and water, and protect public health.

Bill Title: An Act Re-Powering Massachusetts With 100 Percent Renewable Energy, H.2836

Lead Bill Sponsors: Representatives Marjorie Decker and Sean Garballey

Bill Title: An Act Transitioning Massachusetts to 100 Percent Renewable Energy, S.1958

Lead Bill Sponsor: Senator Jamie Eldridge

These bills will power Massachusetts with 100% renewable electricity by 2035 and transition heating and transportation to 100% renewable energy by 2045, while ensuring that the communities that have been most impacted by fossil fuel pollution benefit from the transition to renewable energy.

Building a Better Democracy

Contact: Janet Domenitz, Executive Director, Janet.domenitz@masspirg.org

Our democracy relies on the public's engagement in the democratic process and on their voices being heard above those of special interests. Our state's electoral process is rapidly becoming outdated in an increasingly technological world, and our citizens deserve better.

Bill Title: An Act Relative to Election Day Registration, H.685 & S.396

Lead Bill Sponsors: Representative Elizabeth Malia and Senator Cynthia Creem

Bill Title: An Act to Establish Election Day Registration, H. 636

Lead Sponsor: Representative Jennifer Benson

These bills would increase voter participation by allowing citizens to register to vote on Election Day. This reform will increase voter participation, ensure that votes are counted, and extend this most fundamental of rights—the right to vote—to new constituencies.

Bill Title: An Act Relating to Ranked Choice Voting, S.414 & H.719

Lead Bill Sponsors: Senator Jason Lewis and Representatives Andy Vargas and Adrian Madaro

Ranked choice voting (RCV) solves the problem of "spoiler candidates" and vote-splitting. Today, if you support an underdog candidate, you risk "throwing your vote away" on someone who can't win. Too often our system pressures voters to choose the "lesser of two evils," discourages new candidates from running, and elects

candidates without a majority of support. With RCV, your vote stays in play until one candidate wins with a majority - more than 50% - of the vote.

Lowering the Cost of Health Care

Contact: Deirdre Cummings, Legislative Director, DCummings@MASSPIRG.org

Massachusetts has some of the highest health care costs in the country. The rising cost of prescription drugs are the leading driver in rising overall health care costs affecting consumers, employers, and taxpayers. MASSPIRG is working to reduce health care costs, increase the quality and efficiency of care, and protect consumers from unfair fees and practices.

Bill Title: An Act to Ensure Prescription Drug Cost Transparency and Affordability S.706 & H.1133

Lead Bill Sponsors: Senator Jason Lewis and Representative Christine Barber

Anti-competitive practices of both Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBMs) and the Prescription Drug Industry are in part causing prescription drug prices to skyrocket. This bill tackles the high cost of drugs. Specifically it will provide transparency around the underlying costs to produce prescription drugs; restrain abuses of pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs); authorize the Health Policy Commission to set upper payment limits for unreasonably high-priced drugs; require pharmacists to inform consumers if purchasing a drug at the retail price would be cheaper than using health insurance; provide tools to strengthen MassHealth's ability to negotiate lower drug prices; and support a permanent authorization and funding source for "academic detailing" to ensure doctors get accurate information to counter biased drug manufacturer marketing.

Bill Title: An Act to Protect Consumers from Surprise Medical Bills, H.967

Lead Bill Sponsors: Representative Tricia Farley-Bouvier

Surprise billing occurs when patients receive out-of-network care that they did not or could not intentionally choose to receive, and then are faced with unexpected and unaffordable medical bills. This bill protects consumers by requiring health plans and providers to disclose comprehensive information to consumers about the network status of providers; requiring specific patient consent for out-of-network services; and prohibiting providers from billing consumers more than their in-network cost-sharing amount.

Government Spending: Transparency and Accountability

Contact: Deirdre Cummings, Legislative Director, DCummings@MASSPIRG.org

Many of the largest corporations use accounting tricks to shift profits made in Massachusetts to their subsidiaries in offshore tax havens, where they pay little to no taxes. Government studies show that at least 82 of the largest 100 publicly traded U.S. companies maintain subsidiaries in known tax havens.

Bill Title: An Act Relative to Tax Havens and Complete Reporting H.3787

Lead Bill Sponsors: Representative Josh Cutler

In order to level the playing field between local, wholly-domestic businesses and their multinational competitors, this bill closes the loopholes that allow multinational companies to shift profits offshore to avoid state taxes. By moving to the simpler "Complete Reporting" system, companies would no longer be able to misrepresent income earned in Massachusetts by booking it to offshore tax havens. Massachusetts would recoup an estimated \$669 million a year in taxes now lost by booking domestic profits offshore.

8/22/19

