

The Texas Public Interest Research Group (TexPIRG) is a consumer group that stands up to powerful interests whenever they threaten our health and safety, our financial security, or our right to fully participate in our democratic society. TexPIRG's mission is to deliver persistent, results-oriented public interest activism that protects consumers, encourages a fair, sustainable economy, protects public health, and fosters responsive, democratic government.

| Together Against COVID

Protecting Texans against the novel coronavirus pandemic remains TexPIRG's top priority. The roll out of vaccinations brings hope and optimism for the future, but more needs to be done right now to save thousands of Texans' lives. Our government's response to this hundred year tragedy has yet to meet the standards set forth by public health experts across the country. Johns Hopkins University estimates that here in Texas we still need ten times as much testing and tracing as we have now to mitigate the worst of the pandemic and save lives. At least fifty hospitals in Texas are at or above 98% ICU capacity. Dozens of cities across Texas are above 90% capacity citywide. Our own research shows that one in eight nursing homes in Texas have a critical shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE). If we get cases down now, and meet our testing targets in Texas, we can get some pieces of our lives back. TexPIRG supports:

- Appropriating additional funding for ten times as much testing and tracing
- Funding more PPE for nursing home and healthcare workers
- Exempting pandemic-related needs like hand sanitizer from sales tax (HB 86, Canales)
- Preserving local authority to implement measures to prevent spread of COVID-19
- HB 797 (Howard) authorizing home and hospice agencies to administer COVID-19 vaccines

| Transform Transportation

Texans want choices for getting to work, school, shopping and more. As lifestyles change, Texans — especially the Millennial generation — are changing their driving and transportation preferences. The demand for ridesharing, more walkable and bike friendly communities, and more and better transit options are all on the rise. At the same time, Texans are demanding cleaner transportation options, like electric buses over dirty diesel options. TexPIRG supports:

- Expanding funding for public transportation and creating a long-term funding solution for sustainable transportation like HB 207 (Lopez)
- Protecting dedicated funding for the Texas Emissions Reduction Plan, including fully funding electric vehicle rebates and the Clean School Bus Program
- Supporting Texas Central, the proposed bullet train from Dallas to Houston by opposing bills like HB 114 (Toth) that would make it harder to build
- Promoting transportation solutions, including telecommuting (HB 391, Israel) and changes in land use policy, that reduce the need for costly and disruptive highway expansion projects
- Adopting fix-it-first policies that reorient transportation funding away from newer and wider highways and toward repair of existing roads, bridges and transit systems

| Consumer Protection

For more than 40 years, we've been educating consumers about how to protect themselves and their rights. We work to get dangerous products off store shelves, to end exploitative practices, and ensure a level playing field in the marketplace. And we advocate for new rules, institutions and policies to defend consumers from the economic and political power of special interests. Right now, our Watchdog team is focused on consumer threats from data breaches to dangerous toys to price gouging. TexPIRG supports:

- Clarifying the rules for the Texas Department of Insurance's consumer rebate program, as they have failed to provide rate relief during the pandemic-induced windfalls for auto insurers
- Outlawing price gouging on pandemic-related goods in both storefront and online shopping centers
- Ending predatory payday lending which in Texas has an average annual percent return of more than 500%

- Create a statewide consumer protection bureau to prosecute abuses by predatory lenders
- Give consumers, small businesses, and farmers the right to repair products and require device makers to make the tools, parts, and manuals needed for repairs available to independent repair shops
- Protecting Texans' internet privacy by allowing people to opt out of their data being sold to third parties
- Safeguarding public health by banning a set of known toxic chemicals in cosmetics like lead (HB 90, Gervin-Hawkins), mercury, and formaldehyde (HB 74, Gervin-Hawkins)

I High Value Health Care

People living in the United States have access to some of the best medical care in the world, from life-saving drugs, to advanced medical devices, to cutting edge-surgical techniques. But our system is seriously flawed, with costs spiraling out of control leaving many Americans to spend more on care and often receiving worse care than they could get in many other countries. We can do better. We need to shift incentives away from providing treatment and toward the quality of health care outcomes. We have the knowledge to stop providing treatments that do not work and implement simple solutions that improve results. We must hold insurance companies accountable to ensure they are delivering on their commitments to members. And we must drive down the cost of prescription drugs. TexPIRG supports:

- Transparency in prescription drug pricing and the creation of a prescription drug pricing review board
- Expanding nation-leading protections against surprise medical bills for ERISA plans and for air and ground ambulance trips
- Restrictions on pop-up emergency room care that help consumers make smart decisions about when, how, and where to get the healthcare they need

I Modernize the Vote

Democracy thrives when citizens fully participate. Yet our outdated, inaccurate systems create real barriers to the fundamental right to readily cast a ballot. Texas has not taken advantage of advances in our technology that make registering to vote easy, automatic and more accurate and has actively worked to make voting harder. Texas needs a modern and inclusive election system that will make our democracy stronger and more representative. TexPIRG opposes:

- HB 330 (Cain) that would make it harder for people to vote, creating unusually cruel punishments for voters that make mistakes
- Creating more barriers to vote including purging the voter rolls and empowering the Secretary of State to functionally reduce polling place locations (HB 329, Cain)

TexPIRG supports:

- HB 111 (Minjarez), HB 124 (Reynolds) and SB 98 (Menéndez) to automatically register citizens to vote at the issuance or change of a driver's license or identification card at the Department of Public Safety. Expanding Automatic Voter Registration to all agencies with which Texans' interact directly
- HB 350 (Israel) to allow citizens to register to vote online
- HB 519 (Beckley) to allow citizens to register to vote at a polling place during early voting and election day
- HB 160 (Zwiener) to allow an ID card from a public institution of higher education in the state as an acceptable form of ID to vote.
- HB 76 (Meza) Expanding access to voting by mail to all citizens
- Creating an independent redistricting commission to end partisan gerrymandering