

Maryland PIRG

Standing Up
To Powerful Interests

2016 Legislative Agenda

Maryland Public Interest Research Group
3121 St. Paul St., Ste. 26 • Baltimore, MD 21218
(410) 467-9389 • info@marylandpirg.org
www.marylandpirg.org

OUR MISSION

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

As the Maryland General Assembly wraps up their 2016 session we're reflecting on the past 90 days, celebrating successes and highlighting disappointments.

We've got a lot to be proud of and a lot of work ahead of us. As a citizen funded, grassroots organization, we're up against tough odds, but by combining citizen action and tough minded advocacy we can make progress on our most pressing issues.

Here is a snapshot of Maryland PIRG's priorities. Onward!

-Emily Scarr, Maryland PIRG Director

KEEP ANTIBIOTICS WORKING

At least 23,000 Americans die every year from antibiotic-resistant bacteria. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention warns that the widespread overuse of antibiotics on industrial farms is making them less effective and is serious threat to public health.

PUBLIC INTEREST LOSS

A bill to stop the overuse of antibiotics on large Maryland farms (SB607/HB829), sponsored by Senators Paul Pinsky and Shirley Nathan Pulliam and Delegate Shane Robinson. The bill would stop the routine use of medically important antibiotics in livestock production.

We're working stop this outdated practice through shifting markets and legislative action. This summer we will be knocking on doors across the state to build support for our campaign and calling on KFC and other chains to stop serving meat raised with routing antibiotics.

HEALTHY KIDS, HEALTHY

Every day, our families are exposed to toxic chemicals found in consumer products which are linked to cancer, asthma, learning disabilities, reproductive problems and other chronic diseases. Maryland PIRG supports policies that give consumers the right to know what is in consumer products and replace dangerous chemicals with safer alternatives.

PUBLIC INTEREST LOSS

Green Cleaning for Day Care Centers, HB1391, sponsored by Delegate Angela Angel to promote non-toxic cleaning for Maryland day care centers. We are disappointed the House of Delegates did not move this legislation to expand existing green cleaning laws to large in home daycares and daycare centers. We hope they do so in 2017.

RECLAIMING OUR DEMOCRACY

The influence of wealthy special interests in the funding of elections has eroded public trust in our political system and has discouraged civic participation. Maryland PIRG supports policies that ensure that every citizen, regardless of wealth, has more or less equal opportunity to influence the actions of our government.

PUBLIC INTEREST WINS

The Freedom to Vote Act (HB1007), sponsored by Delegate Eric Leudtke to expand voter registration opportunities to nearly every state agency to help thousands of new voters join the roles. While this bill improves upon our current system, we believe Maryland needs to go further and we are disappointed the automatic voter registration provision was dropped from the bill.

Howard County Resolution 27 to send a charter amendment to the ballot to establish the "Citizen's Election Fund." Sponsored by Councilmembers Jon Weinstein and Jen Terrasa, this is the first step in establishing a county level small donor matching program for candidates that do not take large or corporate contributions.

PUBLIC INTEREST LOSSES

Universal Voter Registration Act (SB350), sponsored by Senator Roger Manno to ensure all eligible voters are registered to vote. We are disappointed the legislature did not pass this bill for automatic voter registration.

A Small Donor Matching system for General Assembly Elections (SB428/HB1248), sponsored by Senator Paul Pinsky and Delegate Carr. To provide limited matching funds for candidates who reject large and corporate campaign contributions.

The Shareholders United Act (SB501), sponsored by Senator Jamie Raskin to hold Maryland corporations accountable to their shareholders before they spend in elections.

Banning corporate contributions to campaigns (HB297), sponsored by Delegate David Moon. There are twenty two states that prohibit corporations from contributing to political campaigns. Unfortunately, Maryland is not yet one of them.

TRANSIT NOT TRAFFIC

Our transportation system should reflect and support the way we want to travel. Despite mounting evidence that Marylanders are seeking to shift away from driving, tax dollars continue to go to new and wider highways, instead of funding expansion of public transit, fixing existing roads and bridges, or making it easier for people to travel by biking and walking.

PUBLIC INTEREST WINS

The Maryland Open Transportation Investment Decision Act of 2016 (HB101/SB0908), sponsored by Delegate Pamela Beidle and Senator James DeGrange, Sr. was passed and Governor Hogan's veto was overridden. The bill creates an open, transparent process for choosing the transportation projects to be funded with taxpayer dollars.

The Maryland Transit Administration Oversight and Planning Board (HB1010), sponsored by Delegate Brooke Lierman to increase effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability to the people and local governments MTA serves.

PUBLIC INTEREST LOSSES

A bill to repeal the farebox recovery requirement for the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), (SB1035/HB0891), sponsored by Cheers to Senator Richard Madaleno and Delegate Brooke Lierman for introducing which is a strong disincentive for investing in transit. The requirement that transit tickets sales cover at least 35% of operating costs is unusual and doesn't take into account the full costs and benefits of public transportation.

DON'T TRASH MARYLAND

*Our neighborhoods, highways, waterways and the Chesapeake Bay are littered with bottles, cans, and plastic bags. Nothing we use for a minute should pollute our environment for decades. Maryland PIRG supports waste policies that **reduce litter**, are **dedicated to the principle of reduce, reuse, recycle** and move our state toward zero waste.*

PUBLIC INTEREST LOSSES

The Maryland Redeemable Beverage Container Recycling Fund and Litter Reduction Act, (HB862/SB367), sponsored by Delegate Barbara Frush and Senator Bill Ferguson.

The Community Cleanup and Greening Act of 2016 (HB0031/SB0057), sponsored by Delegate Brooke Lierman and Senator Victor Ramirez to prohibit the distribution of free single use plastic bags.

PROTECTING CONSUMERS

Maryland PIRG's consumer program works to alert the public to hidden dangers and scams and to ban anti-consumer practices and unsafe products.

PUBLIC INTEREST WINS

Congrats to Delegate Anne Kaiser for passing HB1015, a Study of Student Loan Refinancing in Maryland. The rising cost of college increasingly puts a higher education out of reach for many Marylanders, and the need to increase access to educational financing continues to be a salient issue in public policy. This bill will set up a state study of the viability of a state student loan refinancing body, which may have the potential to make college more affordable for Maryland students.

PUBLIC INTEREST LOSS

A bill to provide victims of security breaches with free access to credit report security freezes, (SB665/HB782), sponsored by Senator Susan Lee and Delegate Jeff Waldstreicher.

SMART ENERGY SOLUTIONS

*Marylanders deserve access to **safe, reliable, and affordable electricity service**. By using energy more wisely and getting clean sources of energy plugged into the grid, Maryland can achieve its potential for a cleaner, safer, cheaper and more reliable energy future.*

PUBLIC INTEREST WINS

The Reauthorization of the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Act (SB323/HB610). Sponsored by Senator Paul Pinsky and Delegate Kumar Barve, requiring the state to reduce statewide greenhouse gas emissions by 40% from 2006 levels by 2030.

Clean Energy Jobs Act, SB921/HB1106, sponsored by Senator Catherine Pugh and Delegate William Frick to increase Maryland's Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard.

PUBLIC INTEREST LOSS

A bill to remove trash incineration from Maryland's Renewable Portfolio Standard (HB1287/SB867), sponsored by Delegate Jeff Waldstreicher and Senator Shirley Nathan-Pulliam

SOUND BUDGET AND TAX POLICY

Maryland is facing tough budget decisions. Maryland PIRG believes that Marylanders have the right to know how our money is being spent, and that no company should be able to game the tax system to avoid paying what it legitimately owes. Unfortunately, multi-state corporations are able to use accounting tricks to avoid paying what they owe in Maryland, leaving individuals and small businesses to bear the brunt of the tax burden.

PUBLIC INTEREST LOSS

The Business Relief and Tax Fairness Act of 2016 (SB432/HB812), sponsored by Senator Paul Pinsky and Delegate Anne Healey to ensure large businesses are paying their fair share of state taxes and level the playing field for Maryland's local businesses.

