

Maryland PIRG

Standing Up To Powerful Interests

2016 Legislative Agenda

Maryland Public Interest Research Group
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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.

For more information about Maryland PIRG's Legislative Priorities, to request our support for a bill, or to ask questions about our position on a specific issue, please don't hesitate to contact us.

We look forward to working with you in 2016 and throughout the entire legislative cycle.

*-Emily Scarr, Maryland PIRG Director
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Reclaiming our Democracy

The influence of wealthy special interests in the funding of elections has eroded public trust in our political system and 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, including policies that:

Stop the Overuse of Antibiotics

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 in animal agriculture is making them less effective and is serious threat to public health.

Maryland PIRG supports policies that stop the overuse of antibiotics on industrial farms that raise poultry, pork or beef by:

- **Stopping the non-therapeutic use of medically important antibiotics** in meat production.
- **Requiring reporting of antibiotics used** by percentage of flock of treated.
- **Allowing antibiotic use for sick animals or to stop an outbreak** once a disease is present.

- **Amplify small donors** at the federal, state and local level by providing limited matching funds for small donors if the candidates do not take large or corporate contributions.
- **Modernize voter registration systems** to ensure all eligible voters are automatically and permanently registered to vote.
- **Help overturn the U.S. Supreme Court's Citizens United and McCutcheon** decisions which have unleashed unprecedented election spending by millionaires and corporations.
- **Force political spending into the light of day and promote democratic shareholder decision making in corporate campaign spending.**

Healthy Kids, Healthy Maryland

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:

- **Protect vulnerable populations**, like women of reproductive age, developing children and workers, from being unwittingly exposed to toxic chemicals **through expanded green cleaning regulations** and other measures.
- **Phase out BPA, formaldehyde, toxic flame retardants** and other toxic chemicals from consumer products and replace them with safer alternatives.
- **Provide consumers with accessible health and safety information** about the presence of toxic chemicals used in everyday products.

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.

Maryland PIRG supports policies that:

- **Invest in transportation infrastructure** that creates more transportation choices, improves air quality and serves communities in need.
- Prioritize **repair and maintenance of our current aging infrastructure**.
- Invest in infrastructure to empower Marylanders to travel by **rail, bus, bike and on foot**.
- Ensure that funding and planning decisions are **open, transparent and accountable to the public**.

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 policies that reduce litter and move toward zero waste, including policies that:

- **Ban single use plastic bags**.
- Create a **container deposit program**.
- Hold **industry responsible for the waste they produce**.
- Promote **recycling, composting and anaerobic digestion**.
- Shift away from **burning, burying or exporting waste**.

Sound Budget & Tax Policy

We have the right to know how our tax dollars are being spent, and 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.

Maryland PIRG supports policies that:

- Encourage **transparency and accountability in public spending, subsidies and incentives**.
- Eliminate **corporate tax-avoidance schemes**.
- **Ensure checks and balances** in budget decisions

Smart Energy Solutions

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

Maryland PIRG supports policies that:

- Protect and renew **funding for energy efficiency programs**.
- Protect ratepayers from **unnecessary rate hikes and poor service**.
- Support **investment in clean, renewable energy**.
- **Move us away from energy production that threatens human health** like incineration, nuclear power, coal and fracking.