

2022 PROGRAM REPORT



ACTION IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

CALPIRG

FROM THE DIRECTOR



DEAR MEMBER

The efforts of CALPIRG staff, members and friends in the past year resulted in the reduction of plastic pollution, prevention of toxic threats to our health, and stronger protections for consumers. In this report, you can learn more about the research, advocacy and grassroots action that make a positive difference in people's lives on these issues and many others.

It's a mission that we carry out in a political climate too often characterized by mutual disrespect and negativity. A frustrating stalemate is always a possible outcome. Yet every day we still find opportunities to do good—to bring people together, find common ground, and solve problems that affect all of us. We're grateful to each of our members, volunteers, donors, friends and supporters like you, who make it possible for us to do all we can to advance the public interest. It is truly our privilege to get to do this work together.



Jenn Engstrom
State Director

MEMBER SPOTLIGHTS



“I pledged my support to PIRG 30 years ago or so because I want my children and grandchildren to have the benefits of clean air, water and overall environment. I see daily reminders of how much damage we have done and know that fixing that damage starts with me.”

Matt C.V., Member

“PIRG keeps me informed. A variety of topics are covered from individual changes I can make to larger government issues that I can at least sign letters of concern. I greatly appreciate PIRG for fighting for a safer, healthier world.”

Helen M., Member

Photos: (Cover) CALPIRG staff join Jenn Engstrom, CALPIRG state director, to call for climate action. (Left) Jenn holds a press conference to discuss the “Chain Reaction VI” report and congratulate Wendy’s on its commitment to stop the use of medically important antibiotics in its beef supply chain. Credits: (Cover) Staff. (Left) Irina Logra Photography. (Above) Photo courtesy of Matt C.V.

ACTION IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST
BEYOND PLASTIC



We won reductions in plastic pollution

A new state law will reduce plastic pollution in California. Under the measure, signed last June, single-use foodware and packaging will have to be recyclable or compostable by 2032. Also, plastic producers will be held financially responsible for wasteful products. As of 2023, California is one of four states to pass a “producer responsibility” law.

In another win for our Zero Waste program, Los Angeles city councilors voted unanimously in December to ban single-use polystyrene foam products, including cups and takeout containers. CALPIRG testified at hearings, organized grassroots lobby days, and gathered letters of support from business owners to help win the ban.



Photos: (Above top) On Valentine’s Day, CALPIRG urged Amazon to “break up with plastic” by reducing plastic packaging. (Above bottom) On Dec. 1, CALPIRG students urged the Los Angeles City Council to ban single-use polystyrene foam. Credits: (Left) STEKLO via Shutterstock. (Above) Ricky Osborne, staff.

ACTION IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

TOXICS & PESTICIDES



We're phasing out uses of toxic PFAS

Thanks to CALPIRG staff and members, California is taking steps to phase out certain uses of PFAS—the chemical compounds that are used across a dizzying array of products, have been linked to kidney and liver disease, birth defects and cancer, and are so persistent that they've earned the nickname “forever chemicals.”

On Sept. 30, Gov. Gavin Newsom signed bills into law that will stop the use of PFAS in cosmetics and beauty products, as well as in textiles and clothing sold in the state. Another CALPIRG-backed law took effect on Jan. 1, 2023, banning the use of PFAS in paper food packaging.



Photos: (Above top) CALPIRG called for action on PFAS in personal care products and outdoor gear. (Above bottom) Staff on our Toxics team educated the public about toxic threats. Credits: (Left) NARONGRIT LOKOOLPRAKIT via Shutterstock.com. (Above, clockwise) Staff; Staff; Staff; Lenscap Photography via Shutterstock; WCSC.

ACTION IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

CONSUMER WATCHDOG



We defended consumers in the marketplace

In 2022, our Right to Repair campaign made it easier for Americans to fix their stuff. After U.S. PIRG Education Fund's reports gave Apple an "F" on smartphone repairability and exposed how John Deere restricts farmers' ability to repair their tractors, both companies announced they would make improvements.

Following a series of high-profile air travel debacles, PIRG provided tip guides to help travelers know their rights and understand how to get refunds for canceled flights.

And since the PIRG-backed No Surprises Act went into effect at the start of 2022, the new law is already preventing 1 million surprise medical bills every month.



Photos: (Left) PIRG Right to Repair Campaign Senior Director Nathan Proctor testifies before a congressional subcommittee for our right to repair the things we own. (Above) PIRG's Teresa Murray alerts the public to consumer threats, while PIRG's R.J. Cross helps consumers protect their data. Credits: (Left) Yazan Aboushi. (Above, clockwise) CBS; SynthEx via Shutterstock; Fox 13.

STOP THE OVERUSE OF ANTIBIOTICS



Cristian Padilla

In October, a report from our research partner U.S. PIRG Education Fund found that most grocery chains reviewed failed to address antibiotics overuse. PIRG supporters sent more than 17,000 petitions to Trader Joe's, urging the grocer to eliminate the routine use of antibiotics in its private-label meat supply.

PIRG WATCHDOG CONSUMER



twinquin84 via Pixabay

In May, President Biden signed the PIRG-backed Safe Sleep for Babies Act into law to ban infant sleepers due to the risk of suffocation. And the 2022 edition of the "Trouble In Toyland" report warned parents about the risks of smart toys that gather children's data, increasing the chances that it will be exposed in a hack.

SAFER STOVES HEALTHIER HOMES



Staff

As evidence mounted that gas stove pollution is toxic to our health, PIRG worked to get Americans the information they need to keep their families safe. Our supporters sent 5,000 petitions urging Best Buy to inform its customers about the risks, and we got the word out through events and in media.

ELECTRIC BUSES CALIFORNIA



Ricky Mackie Photography

In August, CALPIRG co-sponsored an electric school bus ride event in Sacramento to build support for Assemblymember Phil Ting’s bill to require new buses to be electric after 2035. The federal infrastructure bill allocates \$5 billion for zero-emission school buses, and we won another \$1.5 billion in state funding.

HIGH VALUE HEALTH CARE



Washington Journal/CSPAN

After winning the federal No Surprises Act, PIRG’s Patricia Kelmar worked to make sure that the final rules implemented were as strong as possible in 2022. PIRG urged the Biden administration to stand firm to protect patients and avoid accelerating the rise of health care costs.

GET THE LEAD OUT



ixepop via Shutterstock

In April, U.S. PIRG Education Fund released an interactive map confirming widespread lead contamination of school drinking water. In states with the most data, half of all schools tested contained at least one lead-contaminated tap. PIRG staff and supporters urged officials to quickly get the lead out.

50 YEARS OF ACTION & RESULTS

CALPIRG is part of a federation of independent, state-based, citizen funded Public Interest Research Groups. Together, we have a long legacy of victories in the public interest—including state and local wins that have provided blueprints for action nationwide.

1973: CALPIRG surveys impact grocery prices

The publication of a grocery store survey by CALPIRG's San Diego consumer assistance office spurs price competition among supermarkets, leading to lower prices for consumers.

1984: CALPIRG exposes toxic art supplies

CALPIRG's research uncovers school art supplies, such as ceramic glazes and rubber cement, that contain toxic ingredients, leading to statewide reforms and a federal law called the Art and Craft Materials Labeling Act.



1984: PIRG hits student voter registration milestone

CALPIRG and other state PIRGs launch a National Student Campaign for Voter Registration that registers 750,000 student voters in its first year, increasing the registration of 18- to 24-year-old voters by 17%.

1986: PIRG wins drinking water protections

CALPIRG's federal advocacy team plays a key role in passing strong new federal Safe Drinking Water Act amendments to better protect groundwater sources of drinking water from contaminants.

1989: 'Trouble in Toyland' report sparks action

CALPIRG's first annual "Trouble in Toyland" report is released, warning parents of the hidden dangers of certain toys on the market. By 2002, the reports initiate more than 110 recalls and enforcement actions.

1999: CALPIRG wins reduction of pesticides in schools

CALPIRG research reveals that pesticides linked to cancer are being used in school classrooms, cafeterias and playgrounds, leading to legislation to reduce pesticide use in public schools.



Photos: (Above, left to right) Pam Gilbert spotlights toxic art supplies; Lucinda Sikes alerts parents to unsafe toys; CALPIRG staff attorney Teri Olle shakes Gov. Gray Davis' hand after he signed the Healthy Schools Act into law. Credits: Staff; staff; staff.



Five decades ago, groups of college students began investigating problems from shady business practices to illegal pollution. They called themselves PIRG—Public Interest Research Groups. CALPIRG and the PIRG network are celebrating 50 years of action for a change.



2002: Clean Energy Law puts California on a new path

In the wake of a statewide energy crisis, CALPIRG helps win the passage of the Clean Energy Law, setting a statewide commitment to reach 20% renewable power by 2017.

2010: PIRG helps create CFPB

CALPIRG and U.S. PIRG co-found a coalition that, alongside U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren, wins the creation of the federal Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB). Since opening its doors in 2011, the CFPB has helped return \$16 billion in relief for consumers.

2012: PIRG helps win national clean car standards

Expanding on California’s Clean Car standards, CALPIRG’s federal team secures new national standards calling for the average mile-per-gallon standard across the U.S. fleet of cars to hit 54.5 by 2025.

2015: Tyson Foods announces antibiotics phase-out

PIRG helps convince the nation’s largest poultry supplier, Tyson Foods, to commit to phasing out the routine use of antibiotics in its flocks, paving the way for other corporations to follow suit.



2016: California bans single-use plastic bags

After building support in cities and counties to win the nation’s first statewide ban on single-use plastic bags, CALPIRG successfully defends the ban on the ballot.

2018: PIRG helps win free credit freezes for consumers

In the wake of several high profile data breaches, including at credit bureau Equifax, PIRG helps pass a federal bill ensuring access to free credit freezes for all consumers to help prevent damage from identity theft.

Photos: (Above, left to right) CALPIRG Legislative Advocate Dan Jacobson and CALPIRG’s Jerry Flanagan (center) with Gov. Gray Davis. The 2002 California Clean Energy Law was a vital part of the solution to the state’s energy woes. PIRG’s Sujatha Jahagirdar Bergen speaks about antibiotic resistance in 2014; We helped build a coalition across California to build voter support for Prop 67, which banned single-use plastic bags; Credits: Staff; Beverly Jensen Photography; Staff.



California Public Interest Research Group
California Public Interest Research Group Education Fund
 3435 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 385
 Los Angeles, CA 90010
 (213) 251-3680

Member questions: 1-800-838-6554

Non profit Org
 U.S. Postage
 PAID
 Brockton, MA
 Permit No. 430

OUR STAFF

Jenn Engstrom
 State Director

Sander Kushen
 Consumer Advocate

Emily Rusch
 Vice President and Senior Director
 of State Offices, The Public Interest
 Network

Matt Casale
 Director, Environment Campaigns

R.J. Cross
 Director, Don't Sell My Data Campaign

Teresa Murray
 Consumer Watchdog

Nathan Proctor
 Senior Director, Campaign for the Right
 to Repair

Matt Wellington
 Director, Public Health Campaigns

Jenny Douglass
 Director, Membership Services

Emily Reid
 National Canvass Director

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



“... there is a huge need for groups such as CALPIRG to watch out for ‘the little guy’ and for the planet. Being part of CALPIRG makes me feel like I’m part of the team even though I’m not actually doing the work.”

Anastasia “Stacey” Bertolet, Member

To see a full staff list and learn more about our campaigns, visit us online at [CALPIRG.org/about/team](https://calpirg.org/about/team).