ping a bag when they can. That means less waste and less litter. For our children to inherit a less polluted earth, that’s exactly what we need.”

What’s the problem with plastic bags?

In the U.S., we generate 35 million tons of plastic waste each and every year.

We didn’t ask for all this plastic waste, but we can’t avoid it. If you’ve ever tried to go shopping without bringing home a big pile of unnecessary packaging, or if you’ve done any online shopping, you know how hard it is to avoid wasteful plastic.

When it comes to single-use plastic bags, most of those bags are used briefly then discarded, with an average life span of 12 minutes.

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But not all bag bans are equally effective

Well-designed plastic bag bans encourage a shift toward truly sustainable options such as reusable bags, but not all plastic bag bans are created equal.

Some cities and states have adopted policies that deliver reductions in overall plastic bag use but also contain loopholes that allow for the continued use of some types of plastic bags, or that fail to discourage consumers from shifting to single-use paper bags. Even bans with loopholes have driven significant reductions in the number of plastic bags used overall, and in the amount of plastic bag litter found in coastal areas.

To reduce the plastic pollution that threatens our health and our environment, policymakers should adopt a strong statewide ban on single-use plastic bags to minimize plastic waste and should close loopholes that weaken or counteract the effectiveness of existing bans.

BAN TOXIC PFAS

New EPA regulations will better protect consumers from ‘forever chemicals’

On Feb. 1, the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) announced two new rules to strengthen the regulation of “forever chemicals,” which exist in everything from food packaging to clothing.

Commonly known as PFAS, per- and polyfluorinated substances are a class of thousands of chemicals that are extremely persistent in the environment and human body and can lead to serious health consequences such as kidney and liver disease, birth defects and cancer.

New EPA regulations will require the cleanup of PFAS water contamination in accordance with U.S. PIRG Education Fund and Environment America Research & Policy Center’s recommendations in a 2023 report.

“The EPA’s proposal is a welcome step toward cleaning up contamination,” said Emily Scarr, director of PIRG’s Stop Toxic PFAS campaign.
“To fully prevent harm from PFAS, we need to phase out the use of the entire class of PFAS and regulate them as a single class. Otherwise, our regulators and lawmakers will be stuck playing an endless game of whack-a-mole.”

PESTICIDES
This brain-damaging pesticide was banned in 2021. Now, it’s coming back.

A previously banned dangerous pesticide is now set to make a comeback due to a recent court decision, and it could put children’s health at risk.

Chlorpyrifos, a pesticide that had once been labeled a dangerous neurotoxin and banned in 2021 thanks to the help of more than 27,000 PIRG members and supporters like you taking action and voicing their concerns to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), is now potentially set to make a comeback.

The science has been clear on the effects of chlorpyrifos, with years of research showing the pesticide has consistently been linked to brain damage, especially in children.

A court recently overturned the ban despite mountains of scientific research proving chlorpyrifos is dangerous for human consumption. Now it risks reemerging on farms that grow the food our families eat.

We need to act fast and once again urge the EPA to stick to the science and protect kids’ health. The sooner the EPA reinstates its ban on chlorpyrifos, the less likely it is that this hazardous chemical will be used on the food we eat next year.

CONSUMER PROTECTION
Meta should protect kids’ safety in Quest virtual reality

Has a kid in your life been begging you for a virtual reality headset? They can be pretty fun, but before you go out and buy one, there are a few things you need to know.

Meta recently lowered the recommended minimum age for its VR headsets, allowing children ages 10 to 12 to have accounts. Our research partners at U.S. PIRG Education Fund tested Meta’s newest headset, the Quest 3, and warns that it may be unsafe for kids.

Even with increased parental controls, the Quest virtual reality headset could potentially expose young users to inappropriate content, health risks and threats to their privacy.

“Meta says it’s committed to creating safe and positive experiences on Quest. Our testing found real problems remain,” said R.J. Cross, director of U.S. PIRG Education Fund’s Don’t Sell My Data campaign. “Meta’s current efforts are not enough to guarantee a healthy experience for children.”

NMPiRG and our national network are urging Meta not to market its VR headsets to children and teens under 18 unless and until they’re proven safe. Visit our website to add your name to our petition to Meta today.
“Sad that I have to throw out a $1,000 smartphone because I cannot replace the battery. So wasteful,” J. R. Riehle said in one of the thousands of public comments on Right to Repair sent to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC).

U.S. PIRG Education Fund and iFixit have led the charge for Right to Repair to advocate for Americans’ right to fix products they own. PIRG and our allies delivered more than 56,000 signatures calling on the FTC to issue new rules addressing some of the most common barriers to repair.

“In every corner of this country, from Maine to Alaska, from Nebraska to Hawaii, Americans just want to fix their stuff,” explains Nathan Proctor, U.S. PIRG Education Fund’s senior Right to Repair campaign director.

With valuable input from supporters and members like you from all 50 states, PIRG is urging the FTC to take these important steps: create a Repair Score program, require manufacturers to provide a minimum standard of support for repairs, and protect repair choice.

“It is absurd that this is even an open question. We know full well that without a robust right to repair people are trapped in a cycle of either paying an absurd cost for manufacturer repairs or paying slightly more (or in some cases even less) for a new product. This results in a culture of disposable products that harms both consumers’ resources and the environment. If we don’t protect right to repair, we will continue down a path where businesses purposely make it impossible to repair the products you own or have third party repairs performed because their bottom line is increasing new product sales.”

— Ashton Downing, New Mexico