Healthy Living

Sounding The Alarm On Antibiotics

Antibiotic overuse in any setting breeds deadly, antibiotic-resistant bacteria that put public health at risk.

Alarmed by the fact that 70 percent of medically important antibiotics in the U.S. are used on livestock and poultry—not humans—doctors and nurses are coming forward to raise the alarm about the misuse of our life-saving medicines in agriculture.

To make sure elected and corporate decision-makers hear from these experts about antibiotic resistance and what can be done to stop it, U.S. PIRG Education Fund created the Health Professional Action Network.

Already, more than 40,000 health professionals have signed on, and a group of doctors worked with us this summer to produce a video interview series about antibiotic resistance that is reaching thousands online.

As the biggest purchaser of beef in the country, a strong commitment from McDonald’s could change the entire food industry and save lives.

Citizen support also gives us the resources we need to advocate directly in the halls of power. In June, we joined other groups in support of a federal bill to enforce duration limits on antibiotics given to livestock, just like we require in human medicine.

Together with you, we’ll keep working at the state, national and corporate levels to protect the health of future generations.

Product Safety

Stores Stop Selling Deadly Paint Strippers

There are more than 80,000 chemicals on the U.S. market, many of which were never tested for their health impacts.

Drew Wynne’s parents saw the tragic consequences firsthand when their son died from using a paint stripper containing methylene chloride. After hearing Drew’s story in May, our national network joined a coalition effort to get dangerous paint strippers off store shelves.

First, we sent Lowe’s 7,000 petition signatures, urging them to drop these deadly products. Lowe’s listened, announcing it would do so before 2019. Next, we focused on Home Depot. After receiving thousands of comments, the retailer also announced plans to phase out these paint strippers.

With supporters like you by our side, ConnPIRG will continue protecting consumers from toxic threats hidden in plain sight.
**New Economy**

**Right To Repair Is The Fix We Need**

If a product you own breaks, you should be able to fix it or find someone who can. But products ranging from dishwashers to smartphones are purposefully made to be difficult, if not impossible, to repair.

We need to be able to fix our products. But products ranging from dishwashers to smartphones are purposefully made to be difficult, if not impossible, to repair. "While companies profit, the public is forced to pay the price in financial costs and environmental damage," said Nathan Proctor, director of ConnPIRG's campaign for the Right to Repair.

In a video, ConnPIRG Education Fund's Mike Litt criticized the slowdown in consumer protections at the Consumer Bureau—but said the ability of the agency to protect consumers is largely still intact, thanks to our advocates, members and allies.

"As long as consumers keep speaking up, a future CFPB director will be able to ensure a fair and transparent marketplace for consumers and businesses alike," said Litt.

**Zero Out Toxics**

**Companies Move Toward Toxic-Free Products**

For Mother's Day this year, ConnPIRG and our national network sent more than 6,000 petition signatures to L'Oréal—the manufacturer behind brands like Garnier and Maybelline—urging the company to disclose the fragrance chemicals used in its products.

More than 3,000 chemicals can be used to make fragrance—some of which have been linked to cancer and reproductive and respiratory problems. Just weeks after our petition delivery, L'Oréal announced it would make this disclosure.

In July, we scored another victory when Johnson & Johnson agreed to disclose fragrance ingredients in its baby products.

"We're seeing a shift in the personal care products industry toward greater transparency," said ConnPIRG's Dev Gowda, director of our campaign for toxic-free products. "Consumers are demanding it, and the industry is starting to listen."

**21st Century Transportation**

**Fix It First, Then Build For The Future**

Nine highway projects across the country—slated to cost $30 billion—exemplify the need for a fresh approach to transportation planning and spending, according to ConnPIRG Education Fund's fourth annual “Highway Boondoggles” report.

Released in June, the report explores projects from Maryland's $9 billion “Traffic Relief Plan” to Texas’ $8.1 billion Interstate 35 expansion—projects that would do little to address congestion while diverting funding from repairs and 21st-century transportation priorities.

"The money we spend today decides how we get around tomorrow," said Matt Casale, ConnPIRG’s transportation program director. "We need to avoid the type of highway projects that should be in our rearview mirror."

**Consumer Defense**

**Defending The CFPB**

ConnPIRG's national advocates have been hard at work urging lawmakers to pass a budget that doesn’t dismantle the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.
Why do we let companies like Facebook and Equifax, who have done so much to advance digital technology, be so careless with our personal information? And why are we doing so little to hold them accountable when they make a mistake, or allow identity thieves to access our personal information?

These questions drive our national network’s efforts to implement better consumer protections and privacy laws in Connecticut and across the country—work that is only possible thanks to members and supporters like you.

At the national level, while ConnPIRG and our network are excited to see bipartisan action for free credit freezes—an important protection that was included in a bill passed in May—the new federal law unfortunately preempts stronger state laws.

As our advocates told The New York Times, this law could undermine consumer protections that our affiliate groups helped establish in Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Oregon and Washington over the past year.

With support from our members, we will keep encouraging consumers to use credit freezes to protect themselves, and continue looking for new opportunities to push for stronger protections against identity theft.

Despite strong industry opposition, this policy was ultimately adopted as part of the California Consumer Privacy Act, which acts as a model for strong consumer protections in other states.

**Permission To Use Our Data**

To bring current privacy laws up to date with our digital world, ConnPIRG is recommending Congress pass a privacy bill of rights similar to the General Data Protection Regulation, a new privacy law that went into effect in the European Union in May.

“A cornerstone of the new European law is the requirement to obtain permission from consumers before their data can be used. In order to guarantee privacy from companies, Congress should pass legislation that requires permission from American consumers too,” said ConnPIRG’s Mike Litt.

**Progress In The States**

ConnPIRG has also made important progress on data privacy at the state level—where protections can often lay the groundwork for federal action.

In California, our national network teamed up with the Consumer Attorneys of California to prevent future data breaches and make sure negligent companies can be held accountable. Together, we co-sponsored Senate Bill 1121 to make clear that consumers should have a private right to sue when a breach occurs.

“Sure, there are food industry interests, as well as the power of “that’s just the way the world works,” standing in the way of solutions. But ConnPIRG stands for two different forces: the idea that there’s a public interest—a position that benefits all of us—and the idea that change is always possible.

This approach, combined with support from members like you, has helped us convince some of the country’s top restaurants to phase antibiotics out of their supply chains, and we hope McDonald’s will soon do the same.

From addressing antibiotic resistance, to protecting consumers in the financial marketplace, to getting toxic products off store shelves, we stand up for you—but we couldn’t do it without you.

Thank you,

David Rossini, Acting Director
info@connpirg.org

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**YOUR ADVOCATE IN CONGRESS**—ConnPIRG Consumer Campaign Director Mike Litt testifies before the House Financial Services Committee on the Equifax breach and data privacy laws.
It’s Time To Stop Trashing Our Future

Nothing we use for a few minutes should threaten our health or pollute our future for hundreds of years—especially when we don’t need it.

But polystyrene foam, the stuff most of us call Styrofoam, persists in the environment for centuries—meaning every bit of it ever made is still out there clogging our landfills, littering our streets, and polluting our parks, rivers and oceans.

ConnPIRG supporters like you have already sent tens of thousands of comments asking state lawmakers to eliminate polystyrene cups and containers for good, but we’re just getting started.

If we’re successful in banning single-use polystyrene items, we’ll be moving one step closer to zero waste. We’ll see cleaner parks, streets and beaches, less overall waste choking our planet, and a more sustainable future to leave to our children and grandchildren. This is something we can do right now, with your support.

WE HAVE A TRASH PROBLEM —This summer, our national network held beach cleanup events, like the one pictured above in Maryland, to raise awareness about plastic pollution and spur action at the local and state levels.

ConnPIRG's Mission
When consumers are cheated or the voices of ordinary citizens are drowned out by special interest lobbyists, ConnPIRG 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. ConnPIRG’s mission is to deliver persistent, results-oriented public interest activism that protects consumers, encourages a fair, sustainable economy, and fosters responsive, democratic government.

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