



We're going door-to-door in communities across California, building grassroots support to move our state beyond plastic. Credit: Staff

Where the rubber meets the road: CALPIRG's return to canvassing

By Jenn Engstrom, CALPIRG state director

CALPIRG is once again hitting the streets to educate and mobilize Californians around important public interest issues.

This past summer, with a full set of health precautions in place to keep our staff and members of the public safe amid the ongoing pandemic, we relaunched our door-to-door canvassing offices. Our staff visited neighborhoods across California to build support for major reforms that will reduce single-use plastics in our state and require all packaging and throwaway foodware to be recyclable or compostable by 2030.

California is already a leader when it comes to other single-use plastics policies; we passed the nation's first statewide plastic bag ban in 2014, and since then, nine other states have followed suit.

Now, it's time to go even bigger and take on more of the plastic waste that's piling up in our landfills, littering our communities and polluting our environment. I'm excited to share our plans with you and let you know how you can add your voice to this grassroots movement.

Canvassing is in our DNA

Canvassing—going door-to-door—has been a core part of our work at CALPIRG since the early 1980s. We canvass to educate the public about the problems facing our community, build grassroots support for solutions, and raise money to fund our campaigns. Many of our senior staff got their start working on the canvass or helped direct one of our canvassing offices early in their careers.

GO PAPERLESS!

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I remember showing up on my first day as a canvasser in CALPIRG's Sacramento canvass office in May 2007. I was both nervous and excited to learn grassroots organizing skills and make an impact on issues I cared about. Within just a few weeks, I was part of our leadership

live without. And because it can take hundreds of years to degrade, all of that plastic waste is still out there in some form, clogging landfills, littering our streets, polluting our oceans.

CALPIRG is working to pass laws to ban polystyrene foam and other plastic takeout containers and eliminate the non-recyclable packaging that online retailers ship to our homes.

There are several plastic waste reduction bills under consideration this year, and a major plastic reduction ballot measure just qualified for the 2022 ballot—so we have a real chance of winning if we can demonstrate broad public support for these reforms.

It won't be easy. The plastics industry has funded efforts to defeat the California Plastic Pollution Reduction Act several years in a row. That's why we're going door-to-door in communities across California. We'll build grassroots support to convince state leaders that now is the time for bold action to reduce plastic pollution, and we'll win the policies we need to move California beyond plastic. ■



In our United States Against Plastic rally last April, PIRG and Environment America went on a virtual road trip to discuss policies to combat the plastic pollution crisis.

team that recruited and trained dozens of staff to work with us, and by the end of the summer we had recruited thousands of people to join our campaign to increase state funding for transportation.

After that successful first summer, I decided to come back every summer of my college career, and became a full-time staff member when I graduated. For the next 10 years, I managed door-to-door outreach offices for CALPIRG and our sister organizations across the West. During my time as field director for CALPIRG, we reached out to more than 200,000 Californians about the problems we're working to solve—from stopping the overuse of antibiotics to reducing single-use plastic waste—and we signed up 10,000 new members in the process.

One of the biggest reasons we're excited to relaunch our canvass offices is to recruit the next generation of young people to join the public interest movement. This summer, we're helping college students and recent graduates develop a passion for social change, and maybe even launch a career working to create a healthier, safer and more secure world.

Here's how we'll move our state beyond plastic

So much of our plastic waste comes from single-use containers, foodware, packaging and the other plastic "stuff" we know we could easily

NEWS BRIEFS

RIGHT TO REPAIR

President Biden signs executive order supporting right to repair

The right to repair our stuff—without having to pay an arm and a leg to the manufacturer—used to be the status quo. Now, thanks to a presidential executive order, right to repair is on its way back.

President Joe Biden's July 9 executive order called on the Federal Trade Commission to limit software locks on farm equipment and compelled the agency to prohibit "anti-competitive restrictions on using independent repair shops or DIY repairs of your own devices and equipment."

In the span of a few years, PIRG, the independent repair hub Repair.org, and the online repair community iFixit have helped propel right to repair from online forums and local fix-it-yourself clinics to state legislatures—and now even the White House.

CALPIRG's Mission

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

“This is great news for everyone concerned with repair monopolies. It shows that the Right to Repair campaign is moving forward and winning new support,” said Nathan Proctor, PIRG’s Right to Repair senior campaign director. “Already, the majority of American people agree with us. Now, it appears, the president does as well.” ■

PUBLIC HEALTH

CALPIRG celebrates Wendy’s commitment to reduce antibiotics in its beef, but the work is not done yet

One of the most effective ways we can tackle the growing threat of antibiotic-resistant infections—and even help prevent the next pandemic—is to stop the overuse of antibiotics on factory farms.

That’s why we applaud Wendy’s, one of the largest beef buyers in the country, for its recent commitment to end the routine use of medically important antibiotics in its beef supplies by the end of 2030.

Still, though, a report by our national research partners at U.S. PIRG Education Fund shows the continued need for an industry-wide shift in how our favorite restaurants source their meat. Twelve of the 20 chains scored received an “F” for their lack of policies to curb the overuse of antibiotics in their supply chains.

“Commitments from major industry players are a good start, but we can’t stop there,” said CALPIRG State Director Jenn Engstrom. “Efforts to protect our lifesaving antibiotics have resulted in a huge reduction in their use on chickens—and when Wendy’s and McDonald’s follow through on their commitments, it could do the same thing for beef.” ■

TRANSFORM TRANSPORTATION

California gives electric buses a major boost

Clean electric school buses are ready to roll in California.

On May 14, Gov. Gavin Newsom announced a proposal to fund 1,000 new all-electric school buses for districts throughout the state. Currently, most of California’s school buses still run



Irina Logvin Photography

on diesel, which contributes to global warming pollution and has been linked to respiratory illnesses, cancer and even poor academic performance among children. So CALPIRG called on lawmakers to act quickly to take this crucial step toward cleaner transportation—and in July, the state budget was approved with the electric bus funding intact.

“Every time we put our kids on a diesel bus, we’re putting them at risk. Electric school bus technology is here, but we need to make sure that funding programs are in place to help our schools make the switch,” said CALPIRG State Director Jenn Engstrom.

“California’s new investment is a step toward a healthier, safer future. Kids—and their parents—can breathe a little easier today.” ■

CALPIRG State Director Jenn Engstrom held a press conference to discuss the findings of our latest antibiotics report and congratulate Wendy’s on its commitment to stop the use of medically important antibiotics in its beef supply chain.



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TOP STORY:

CALPIRG's return to canvassing

CALPIRG is organizing citizen advocates like you to reduce plastic pollution in the Golden State. Your support makes this work possible.

ZERO OUT TOXICS

Bayer to remove toxic glyphosate from Roundup

As Bayer plans to reformulate its weed killer Roundup, the company has a chance to finally ensure its product is safe—but only if it doesn't just replace one toxic chemical with another.

After a federal judge rejected a proposal in May to resolve future claims that Roundup causes cancer, Bayer has now announced it will remove the weed killer's main active ingredient, glyphosate, which has been recognized as a probable human carcinogen since 2015.

Thousands of people have made legal claims that using Roundup caused their non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. And years of organizing, activism and public pressure, fueled by members like you, has helped make this progress possible.



Mike Mozart via Flickr; CC BY 2.0

Roundup, and generic versions of it, is the most widely used herbicide in the U.S.—despite being linked to cancer.

"A product we use for lawn care shouldn't put us at risk of developing cancer," said Danielle Melgar, advocate for PIRG's toxics campaigns. "We're calling on Bayer to reformulate its product the right way with chemicals that don't pose risks to human health." ■

THANKS TO YOU



Dear CALPIRG member,
Your support is what allows CALPIRG and our national network to build momentum for policies and solutions that will move our country beyond plastic, ensure products are toxic-free, secure Americans' right to repair, and much more. Thank you for standing with us.

Jenn Engstrom
State Director
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