Public Health

Hold The Antibiotics, McDonald’s

For years, the meat industry has vastly overused medically important antibiotics to produce more meat more cheaply. But this misuse is breeding “superbugs”—drug-resistant bacteria that can cause infections we can’t treat.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that if we don’t take action soon, we could all live in a post-antibiotic era, where common infections can once again kill. Some experts are even warning that superbugs could kill more people by 2050 than cancer kills today.

Given the lack of progress at the federal level, CALPIRG is seeking to save antibiotics through corporate action. Since restaurant chains are sensitive to consumer demand, and are some of the biggest purchasers of meat, they are a great target for changing agricultural practices.

Industry-Wide Change

Along with our national network, we’ve helped convince McDonald’s, Subway, KFC and other chains to stop serving chicken raised on human antibiotics.

Thanks to your support, these commitments are changing the industry. The most recent FDA data shows that sales of medically important antibiotics for food production fell for the first time since recordkeeping began.

But with 23,000 Americans dying each year from antibiotic-resistant infections, we need more action. So we’re going back and calling on McDonald’s, one of the country’s biggest purchasers of beef and pork, to get our life-saving medicines out of its entire supply chain.

This summer, our national citizen outreach staff are going door to door across the country to raise awareness and mobilize public support for saving our antibiotics. With your generous support, we can continue pushing to keep our life-saving medicines working for when we really need them.

PIRG Consumer Watchdog

Consumers Deserve More After Equifax

When the credit bureau Equifax lost the critical financial data of nearly 148 million Americans last year, it was a startling reminder that we need a lot more control over our personal information.

If you haven’t taken steps to protect yourself, such as placing credit freezes or fraud alerts, you should. But in most states, protecting your credit will require you to pay a fee to ensure all three credit agencies protect your data.

That’s why we’re supporting legislation that would set free freezes for all Americans as the floor of protection. While Congress delays, our national network has been working on free credit freeze bills in several states, including California, Colorado, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Oregon and Washington.

With your support, CALPIRG will continue working to ensure you have the tools you need to protect yourself from identity thieves.
Product Safety

Asbestos Shouldn’t Be In Kids’ Makeup

In 2018, we shouldn’t tolerate the sale of products that contain toxicss—especially products marketed to children.

Yet research done by CALPIRG Education Fund has revealed lead in toys, chemicals linked to cancer in personal care products, and most recently, asbestos hiding in kids’ shimmery makeup.

Our sister group’s report, “In Your Face,” found that three different products sold by Claire’s contained asbestos, with one containing more than 150,000 fibers of asbestos per gram of product.

We quickly alerted Claire’s to these test results, and asked the company to recall the items and inform customers immediately. We’re also calling on Congress to pass legislation that will protect our kids by requiring appropriate testing and labeling of cosmetics.

Toxics

No More Bee-Killing Pesticides

Bees pollinate everything from strawberries to broccoli to the alfalfa used to feed dairy cows, and without them, our food supply and environment would be at risk.

Even so, Americans spray about 46 million pounds of neonicotinoid pesticides—one of the worst types of bee-killing pesticides in the world, yet also the most widely used—on our gardens and public spaces every year.

Given the consequences, CALPIRG is calling on our state to ban the sale of bee-killing pesticides. There is already momentum building: Maryland and Connecticut have both taken important action to limit the use of neonicos, and the European Union just voted to completely ban them.

We can, and must, do better. Join us in calling on California to take action to protect bees and our food.

Defend Net Neutrality

A Free And Open Internet Is Worth Defending

When the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) decided to repeal net neutrality protections last December, CALPIRG mobilized our members and supporters to defend a free and open internet.

By empowering internet service providers like Comcast, Verizon and AT&T to potentially block or slow down lawful content, or create internet “fast lanes” that would favor certain sites and content over others, the FCC’s decision will suppress consumer choice and fair competition online.

With your support, CALPIRG ran several online campaigns to raise awareness and rally support for net neutrality, focusing on a bill in Congress that would overturn the FCC’s decision. As of this writing, the legislation is under consideration in the Senate and House.

Democracy

California Launches New Motor Voter Law

In April, California’s long-awaited motor voter law went into effect. Now, eligible Californians who apply for driver’s licenses will be automatically registered to vote unless they opt out.

The law modernizes voter registration in our state by merging the registration process with the driver’s license application and renewal process, and by eliminating the error-prone paper form system that preceded it.

The law also facilitates the pre-registration of 16- and 17-year-olds who interact with the Department of Motor Vehicles, a crucial CALPIRG-backed provision that encourages civic engagement among the next generation of California voters.

CALPIRG has supported this overdue investment in our democratic system since 2015, because our government is strongest when all citizens make their voices heard on Election Day. With support from our members, CALPIRG will continue our work to modernize our election systems and encourage voter participation.

Be An Advocate For California’s Future

CALPIRG and CALPIRG Education Fund gratefully accept bequests, beneficiary designations of IRAs and life insurance, and gifts of securities to support our work for consumers and toward a healthy democracy in our state.

For information, call (800) 841-7299, or email plannedgiving@calpirg.org
Defending The Protections Americans Rely On

After the 2008 economic crisis, millions of Americans lost their jobs, their homes, their retirement savings and more. That’s why CALPIRG played a lead role in setting up a consumer protection agency, and helped put in place rules of the road to keep Wall Street in check.

These rules help ensure a fair and competitive marketplace that keeps consumers’ best interests in mind. And the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau has returned nearly $12 billion to more than 29 million consumers. But now, in the name of regulatory reform, Wall Street, big banks and their allies in Congress are working to strip away these vital consumer protections.

With the support of our members, CALPIRG is able to push back on behalf of the public when consumers are put at risk of wrongdoing.

Opposing Anti-Consumer Attacks In Washington

We’re on the ground in Sacramento and Washington, D.C., keeping an eye on threats to commonsense consumer protections.

We’ve been successful in stopping legislation that would change the funding and leadership structure of the Consumer Bureau, both of which are key to the agency’s past success and continued independence. And we’ve been hard at work opposing the anti-consumer moves of Mick Mulvaney, who has been limiting the Consumer Bureau’s capabilities since the president put him in charge of the agency in November.

Another major threat to consumers in the past few months has been S. 2155, a bank deregulation bill that, despite supporters’ claims, would likely increase mortgage fraud, racial discrimination and risky banking practices. The legislation would also replace stronger state laws against identity theft, potentially deny servicemembers their right to a day in court, and more.

With your support, our advocates have been fiercely opposing this legislation to let Equifax and big banks off the hook, and calling on decision-makers at the state and national levels to instead enact reforms to give consumers more control over our financial lives.

Solutions To Problems We All Face

Whether it’s defending the original mission of the Consumer Bureau or opposing bills that ignore the painful lessons of the 2008 financial crisis, CALPIRG works to unite people from across the political spectrum around commonsense solutions to problems we all face.

But we couldn’t do any of this without the support of members like you. With you by our side, we’ll continue defending consumers and working toward a safer, healthier, more secure future.

Thanks To You

Dear CALPIRG member,

By the time you read this letter, our summer door-to-door canvass will be in full swing. In an age of email and social media, this annual effort might seem old-fashioned, but it’s as necessary as ever.

This summer, CALPIRG and our national network are rallying support in 22 states to preserve our life-saving antibiotics. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that at least 23,000 people die every year from antibiotic-resistant bacteria, and experts point to antibiotic overuse on industrial farms as one of the main factors.

In 2015, we helped pass a California law to ban the overuse of antibiotics on farms in our state. And over the past few years, we’ve helped convince restaurants like Subway and KFC to take action as well. Now, we’re calling on McDonald’s to get our life-saving medicines out of its entire meat supply chain, a big commitment that would help protect public health and save lives.

The summer canvass also gives us an opportunity to reach people who might not otherwise hear about this problem and what we can do to solve it. And even for those who might not agree with us, it’s harder to ignore a canvasser at your door than a report from a news source you don’t like.

I’m so grateful for your current support, and I’m excited to see what your support will accomplish this summer and beyond.

Sincerely,

Emily Rusch
Executive Director
info@calpirg.org
Getting The Lead Out Of Oakland Schools

When we send our children to school, we’re making an investment in their future.

But too often, children are exposed to lead—a potent neurotoxin—in their schools’ drinking water. At one early childhood center in Oakland, test results indicated lead levels more than 200 times the limit recommended by pediatricians.

That’s why CALPIRG launched the Oakland Get The Lead Out coalition, a group of organizations dedicated to ridding one of California’s largest school districts of lead contamination in its drinking water.

We celebrated real progress earlier this year when the Oakland Unified School District Board of Directors approved a new policy that expands testing of water fountains throughout the district and requires school officials to shut off and fix water outlets that test positive for more than 5 parts per billion of lead.

Still, no amount of lead is safe. That’s why CALPIRG is pushing the district to commit to replacing all lead-bearing parts in its water systems—and to filter its water until that work is finished.