

NMPIRG

Standing Up To Powerful Interests

New Mexico Public Interest Research Group & NMPIRG Education Fund



**New Law To Promote
Drug Safety**
(page 3)



**Will Congress Follow
States' Lead On ID Theft?**
(page 5)



**Aid Increased For
Students, Parents**
(page 7)

2007 ANNUAL REPORT

Product Safety: A Call For Stronger Action

New Toy Safety Bills In Congress

In 2007, the recalls of millions of lead-tainted or otherwise hazardous toys made headlines for months. The media frenzy brought new attention to our longstanding calls for more funding, tougher enforcement and more accountability at the federal Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). Within a span of two months, our senior fellow in Washington, D.C., Ed Mierzwinski, was quoted or featured in stories in the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post, Time magazine, the Los Angeles Times and the Chicago Tribune.

Unfortunately, we weren't surprised by the recalls. Our yearly holiday season survey typically finds dozens of unsafe toys, and 2007 was no exception. Our researchers found one toy that contained 65 percent lead by weight—more than 1,000 times the legally acceptable limit. The CPSC went on to ban any children's metal jewelry containing more than 0.06 percent lead by weight.



NMPIRG's Andrew Davidge (left) and Dr. Benjamin Hoffman, joined by NMPIRG volunteers, speak with the press about some of 2007's most dangerous toys.

Download copies of our toy safety research and get more information on the latest recalls and action in Congress. Go to our Web site, www.nmpirg.org.

We released the toy safety report here in Albuquerque and in 75 cities across the country, resulting in media coverage on local television, the Albuquerque Journal and hundreds of newspapers nationwide. Thousands of people downloaded the report and our toy safety tip sheet.

In December, Congress acted on some our concerns by providing the CPSC with an \$80 million budget for FY08—\$16.75 million more than the Bush administration’s request. That same month, Congress introduced bills that would increase the fines that manufacturers pay when unsafe products reach consumers. Our work in 2008 will focus on strengthening consumer protections in the bill that will eventually go to the president’s desk.



Chip Somendalla, Getty Images

Chairman and CEO of Mattel, Inc., Robert Eckert, and acting head of the CPSC, Nancy Nord, were called to testify before Congress after massive toy recalls.

You can sign up for updates via e-mail on our Web site. We'll let you know when it's important for Congress to hear from you on toy safety and other important issues.



Health Care & Rx Drugs: Standing Up To Drug-Makers

New Law To Promote Drug Safety

Despite fierce resistance from the pharmaceutical industry, Congress passed new legislation in 2007 that should make the drugs we put in our medicine cabinets a little safer.

NMPIRG helped convince Reps. Wilson, Pearce and Udall to stand behind provisions that would require greater transparency in clinical trials of new drugs, fewer conflicts of interest on FDA drug safety panels and greater accountability for drug companies that fail to perform required safety studies—including fines of up to \$10 million.

According to Steve Blackledge, our lead advocate on the issue, controversies surrounding the harmful side effects of such drugs as Vioxx, Paxil and Avandia left members of Congress more open to our push for reform. “In the end,” said Blackledge, “there were too many headlines about dangerous drugs. Congress had to act and we’re pleased they did.”



Peter Morgan, Reuters; cover (middle): John Keith

Raymond Gilmartin, former CEO of Merck, speaks at a press conference, announcing the recall of their drug, Vioxx. Merck opposed drug safety legislation.

Read our report, “Turning Medicine Into Snake Oil: How Pharmaceutical Marketers Put Patients At Risk,” on our Web site, www.nmpirg.org.

Financial Privacy & Security: Truth About Credit

Countering Deceptive Marketing

For years, credit card companies have aggressively marketed their products to college students in New Mexico, but failed to adequately disclose fees and rates. With students and parents struggling with the already high cost of a college education, we called on college administrators and Congress to rein in credit card companies that target younger consumers.

With the help of the Ford Foundation, we launched our Truth About Credit campaign. On college campuses, we conducted counter-marketing campaigns and pushed colleges to stop aiding the marketing of cards on campus. Handing out lollipops emblazoned with the words “Don’t be a sucker,” student volunteers informed their peers about credit traps. In a story on the campaign, Business Week quoted Ed Mierzwinski, our chief advocate on the issue: “College students are vulnerable and already hammered by the high cost of education.”



Norma Jean Carreras

A student volunteer with the Truth About Credit campaign speaks with a peer about deceptive credit card deals. College students graduate with an average of \$4,000 in credit card debt.

Find out how students and others can get involved to avoid credit card debt on our Web site, www.nmpirg.org.

Financial Privacy & Security: Identity Theft

Will Congress Follow States' Lead On ID Theft?

New Mexico residents are among the millions of Americans in 40 states who now enjoy stronger protections against identity theft, thanks to laws based on model legislation crafted by our consumer advocates and our allies at Consumers Union.

In recent years, our lawmakers have given consumers the power to “freeze” access to their credit reports to lock out identity thieves, and have required companies, such as TJ Maxx, to notify their customers when they lose financial information. Lobbyists for the financial industry have resisted, urging Congress to pre-empt strong state-level protections with weak federal standards. With Ed Mierzwinski, our top consumer advocate, leading the way, we’ve stopped the rollback. Said Ed, “We need the federal government to lead, follow or get out of the way.” According to the Federal Trade Commission, identity theft affects 10 million Americans each year.



Kevin Clark, Washington Post

Consumer Program Senior Fellow, Ed Mierzwinski, works with allies like Joan Claybrook of Public Citizen (background) to stop pre-emption of state laws.

For more information on state and federal progress on stopping identity theft, go to our Web site, www.nmpirg.org.



Money & Politics: Lobby Reform

Victory For A More Open Government

A new law bans gifts and travel paid for by lobbyists, requires lobbyists to disclose the contributions they raise on behalf of candidates, and makes former lawmakers wait longer before they can return to Capitol Hill as lobbyists. The House approved the bill in August by a vote of 411 to 8.

Congressional leaders on the issue relied on Gary Kalman, our chief advocate on the issue, for his help in shaping a bill that would produce real reform. For example, his research on best practices at state ethics commissions was used in committee hearings.

With the support of Sens. Bingaman and Domenici, the Honest Leadership and Open Government Bill passed the Senate on Jan. 18, 2007 and was signed into law by the president eight months later.



Democracy Advocate Gary Kalman testifies before the Senate Rules Committee on lobbying and ethics reform.

After Congress passed lobby reform rules, we pushed for an independent enforcement commission. Find out the latest on our Web site, www.nmpirg.org.

Higher Education Project: Student Debt

Aid Increased For Students, Parents

Congress voted in September to reinstate billions of dollars in student aid. We called on members of New Mexico's congressional delegation to support the bill, which increased the maximum Pell grant from \$4,310 to \$5,400, limited monthly payments on federally backed loans to 15 percent of the borrower's income, and offered loan forgiveness to graduates in public service professions. To pay for the changes, the bill slashed subsidies to the \$85 billion student loan industry, which lobbied in opposition of the bill.

In the 18 months before the bill's passage, our staff researched and released three studies on the problem—one on the link between student debt and post-graduate career choices, another on the rate of student debt inflation, and a third on the effect of interest rate cuts on student loans. Luke Swarthout, our chief advocate on the issue, was quoted widely in media coverage, including in Time magazine and The New York Times.



Higher Education Advocate Luke Swarthout (at podium) speaks at a press conference with Sen. Bernie Sanders (Vt.) and Sen. Ted Kennedy (Mass.), leading up to groundbreaking student aid reform.

Read the three reports that helped tip the scales on the student aid funding bill. You can download the reports on our Web site, www.nmpirg.org.

Voting & Democracy: The Power Of The Youth Vote

Youth Vote Surged In Primaries

Thousands of young people took their first steps toward a lifetime of civic participation by registering to vote in 2007. NMPIRG helped increase their numbers through our New Voters Project, run in coordination with other PIRGs across the country. The work paid off in 2008, when the youth vote (18- to 29-year-olds) more than tripled in the Iowa caucuses and increased by 25 percent in the New Hampshire primaries, compared to 2004 turnout.

Young voters turned out in record numbers despite the earlier-than-usual caucuses and primaries, bad weather, and a polling day that fell in the middle of winter break for most colleges. The results show that more young people will vote if their peers encourage them to do so and if the candidates address the issues they care about—current issues such as global warming, college affordability, health care and financial security.



New Voters Project Organizer Abe Scarr (right) speaks with Gov. Bill Richardson about his plan on issues affecting young people.

See more pictures and find out more about the New Voters Project in New Mexico at www.newvotersproject.org/whatsyourplan.

NMPIRG Supporters

Citizen support is the cornerstone of NMPIRG and the NMPIRG Education Fund. Thousands of New Mexico citizens supported NMPIRG by making membership contributions in 2007. The members listed below were particularly generous in backing the organization's research and advocacy. Names that appear in italics denote our monthly supporters. These members provide stability to the organization's resources through our monthly giving program.

Development Committee

NMPIRG Development Committee members supported the organization with contributions of \$500 or more.

Robert Andrews • Elspeth Bobbs • Niels Chapman • Rick Hudson • Iris Weinstein & Steven Margulis • Douglas H. Phelps • Duane Ross, MD • Elizabeth B. Timken • Azim Abdul Zamir

Patrons

Patrons supported NMPIRG with contributions of \$350 to \$499.

G. Elizabeth Billups • Don Campbell • James Crouse • Kat Cuadros • Mark Deprima • Peter Edwards • David Jordan • Janis Martinez • Marcia Newren • Marcy Osgood • Roger Petrin • Jim Piatt • Jody Price • Joey & Pam Quintana • Jeffery E. Radtke • Arlene Safier • Monique Schoustr • Lori Serkland • Caitlin Thomas • Ruxton Waddell • Kathleen Winslow

Sponsors

Sponsors supported NMPIRG with contributions of \$250 to \$349.

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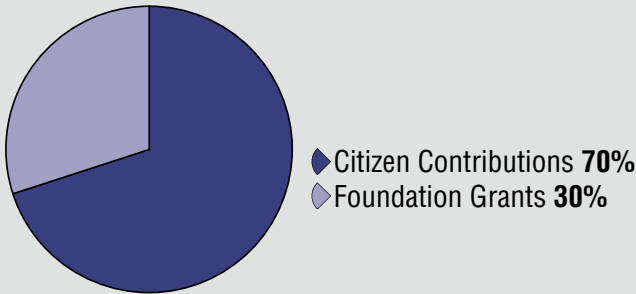
Planned Giving

Members who include NMPIRG in their wills leave a legacy of activism that will protect consumers and taxpayers, as well as revitalize participation in the democratic process for decades to come. For more information about including NMPIRG in your estate and major giving plans, call (800) 841-7299 or e-mail plannedgiving@nmpirg.org.

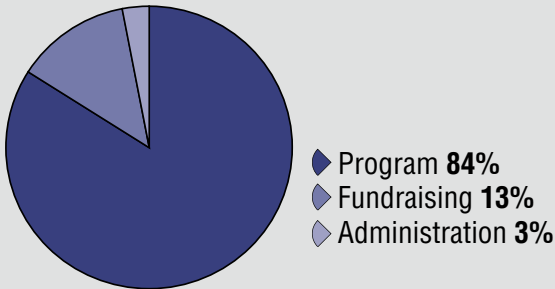
Financial Information

Charts reflect FY07 financial information for NMPIRG and the NMPIRG Education Fund.

FY07 Income



FY07 Expenses



NMPIRG's mission is to deliver persistent, result-oriented public interest activism that encourages a fair, sustainable economy and fosters responsive, democratic government. You can always keep up to date on the progress of our work at the state and federal level by visiting our Web site.



Ed Mierzwinski
Consumer
Program Senior
Fellow

Dear NMPIRG member,

Here at NMPIRG, we take on important issues with big opposition. Sometimes that means it takes years of dogged advocacy to win. Recently, we've seen some of that persistence pay off.

After people suffered due to unsafe drugs, we were able to pass drug safety legislation through Congress. After students and parents struggled with the high cost of a college education, we helped pass the largest increase in student aid in 15 years. It's difficult to imagine what these problems that we face today would be like if it weren't for the support of our members.

Thanks to all of our citizen members, we'll continue to fight for the public.

Sincerely,

The Staff here at NMPIRG

2007 ANNUAL REPORT

NMPIRG Staff (partial list)



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