

# PIRGIM

**Standing Up  
To Powerful Interests**

**Public Interest Research Group in Michigan & PIRGIM Education Fund**



**Holding Drug Companies  
Accountable**  
*(page 1)*



**Supporting Safer  
Chemical Facilities**  
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**Protecting Financial  
Privacy**  
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**FY07 ANNUAL REPORT**

# 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 in the future.

Michigan's own Rep. Dingell was the lead sponsor of the legislation, and PIRGIM urged the rest of our state's congressional delegation 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 Paul Brown, our lead advocate on the issue, controversies surrounding harmful side effects left Congress more open to reform. "In the end, there were too many headlines about dangerous drugs. Congress had to act."



*Raymond Gilmartin, former CEO of drug-maker Merck, speaks to the media. The pharmaceutical industry opposed drug safety provisions.*

Read about our work to ensure prescription drugs are safe on our Web site,  
[www.pirgim.org](http://www.pirgim.org).



# Financial Privacy & Security: Identity Theft

## States Led. Will Congress Reverse Them?

Michigan residents are among the millions of Americans in 39 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 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 preempt 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.



*Consumer Program Director Ed Mierzwinski works with allies like Joan Claybrook of Public Citizen (background) to stop the preemption of strong state laws.*

*For more information on state and federal progress on stopping identity theft, go to our our Web site, [www.pirgim.org](http://www.pirgim.org).*



# Toxic-Free Communities: Safer Alternatives

## Supporting Safe Chemical Facilities

The lives of thousands of people who work at or live near Michigan's seven chemical facilities would become a little safer under legislation introduced in Congress this past year.

Sept. 11th reinforced PIRGIM's commitment to the switch from dangerous chemicals to less toxic alternatives. Guards and locks aren't enough. To protect our communities from an array of toxic threats, from accidents to terrorist attacks, facilities must shift to safer alternatives. In late 2006, however, chemical industry lobbyists weakened the Homeland Security bill, removing requirements for safer alternatives. Alex Fidis, a staff attorney and our chief advocate on the issue, submitted research and recommendations to the Department of Homeland Security. Alex prompted hearings on the bill in July of 2006. We earned the backing of Reps. Markey (Mass.), Thompson (Miss.), and Jackson-Lee (Texas) for a strong chemical safety bill in 2007.



*Each year, accidents at chemical facilities, such as refineries, put over 4 million lives at risk in Michigan.*

Read "Toxic Pollution and Health," our report on chemical safety. You can download the report on our Web site, [www.pirgim.org](http://www.pirgim.org).



# Food Safety: No Time For Retreat On Protections

## Bid To Weaken Safety Standards Rebuffed

Incredibly, even as the food-borne *E. coli* outbreaks caused by contaminated spinach raised concerns over the nation's food supply, last year some members of Congress pushed to roll back food safety standards at the behest of the food manufacturers lobby.

We called on Congress to oppose the so-called National Uniformity for Food Act, or any bill that would diminish the rights of state and local governments to protect people from unsafe food. Thanks to an outpouring of opposition, the 109th Congress failed to bring the bill to a vote. The Act would have eliminated food safety and labeling standards that are more protective than federal standards—even when the federal government had no regulation on the books. We were joined in our opposition to the bill by 39 state attorneys general and the Association of Food and Drug Officials.



*Even after five people died from eating contaminated spinach, lobbyists for food manufacturers pushed to roll back safety standards.*

Read research on food safety and other topics on our Web site, [www.pirgim.org](http://www.pirgim.org).



# Money & Politics: Lobby Reform

## Victory For A More Open Government

Responding to a wave of corruption scandals, in 2007 Congress passed the most sweeping changes in a generation to the rules governing lobbying. The president signed the bill, which we supported, in September.

The 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 by a vote of 411 to 8. Michigan's delegation voted unanimously for the bill, and Sen. Debbie Stabenow was one of the bill's champions in the Senate. 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.



*Democracy Advocate Gary Kalman meets with Rep. Chris Van Hollen (Md.), left, who led the fight for strong lobby reform measures.*

*Read the report on how state ethics commissions set an example for Congress to follow. You can download the report on our Web site, [www.pirgim.org](http://www.pirgim.org).*



# Toy Safety: A Call For Stronger Action

## Amid Recalls, Demands For Accountability

In 2007, the recalls of millions of lead-tainted or otherwise hazardous toys made headlines for weeks. 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, Consumer Program Director 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 2006 was no exception. Our researchers found four toys with lead levels ranging from 1.8 percent lead to 34 percent lead by weight. The CPSC later voted to ban any children's metal jewelry containing more than 0.06 percent lead by weight.



*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.*

Download copies of toy safety research, and get more information on the latest recalls and action in Congress. Go to our Web site, [www.pirgim.org](http://www.pirgim.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 Michigan'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 opposed 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.



*Sarah Clader, a senior at Rutgers University, speaks with Reps. Tim Bishop (N.Y.), Linda Sanchez (Calif.), Kendrick Meek (Fla.) and Debbie Wasserman Schultz (Fla.), all co-sponsors of the student aid bill.*

*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.pirgim.org](http://www.pirgim.org).*



# Voting & Democracy: The Power Of The Youth Vote

## New Voters, New Tactics Boost Youth Vote

Thousands of young people took their first steps toward a lifetime of civic participation by voting in Michigan in 2006.

PIRGIM helped increase their numbers through our New Voters Project, run in coordination with other PIRGs across the country. In targeted precincts, the youth vote turnout increased by an average of 157 percent over 2002. One effective technique: text messaging. Working with researchers from the University of Michigan and Princeton University, our New Voters Project and Working Assets found text message reminders to new voters increased an individual's likelihood of voting by 4.2 percentage points. As the presidential campaign got underway, New Voters Project volunteers launched What's Your Plan?, an effort to persuade the candidates to offer specifics on global warming, college affordability, health care and financial security.



*New Mexico Governor and presidential candidate Bill Richardson speaks with New Voters Project Organizer Abe Scarr about his plan to deal with issues affecting young people.*

See more pictures and find out more about the New Voters Project in Michigan at <http://www.newvotersproject.org/whatsyourplan>.



# PIRGIM Supporters

Citizen support is the cornerstone of PIRGIM and the PIRGIM Education Fund. Thousands of Michigan citizens supported PIRGIM by making membership contributions in fiscal year 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

PIRGIM Development Committee members supported the organization with contributions of \$600 or more.

*Michael Assenmacher • Kathy Giancarlo • John Morris • Douglas H. Phelps • Annis Pratt • Mary Kay Stark-Marwill*

## Patrons

Patrons supported PIRGIM with contributions of \$300 - \$599.

*William Backstrom • Sara Epple Baitch • Jennifer Bilborough • Dan Boe • Donna Bookholder • Jean Brewer • Janet Burke • Marianne Clauw • Patricia Connors • Richard Davis • Nadine Davis • Jacque Eccles • Karen & Al Gallup • Ray Green • Barton Grimm • John Hawley • Henry Heinold • Zack Ismail • Robert Johncox • Linda Johnson • Regina Kroliskowski • Tammy Krueger • Robert Kyes • Neal Manson • Christine McCloskey • Betsy Mehr • Philip Menard • Lori Mercier • Pamela Murray • Coco Newton • Stuart Novick • David Osta • Marcia Parven • Nhan Pham • Elaine Pomeranz • Don Quinn • Salmaan Rahman • Andrew Rajkovich • Kurt Riegel • Margaret Roberts • Bill Rohlfing • Thomas Ryan • Matt Schonfield • Elizabeth Schwab • Marilyn Shalibo • Sue Sisty • Peter Smereka • Tom Spademan • Timothy Tavalire • James Timmons • Steve Van Nocker • Hugh Walker • Shirley Zempel*

## Sponsors

Sponsors supported PIRGIM with contributions of \$200 - \$299.

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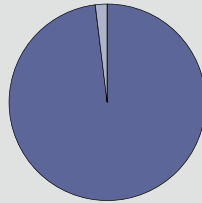
### Planned Giving

Members who include PIRGIM 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 PIRGIM in your estate and major giving plans, call (800) 841-7299 or e-mail [plannedgiving@PIRGIM.org](mailto:plannedgiving@PIRGIM.org).

## Financial Information

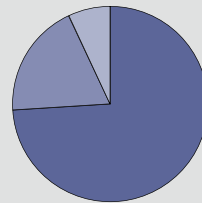
Charts reflect FY07 financial information for PIRGIM and the PIRGIM Education Fund.

### FY07 Income



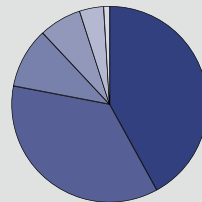
- ◆ Citizen Contributions **98%**
- ◆ Foundation Grants **2%**

### FY07 Expenses



- ◆ Program **74%**
- ◆ Fundraising **19%**
- ◆ Administration **7%**

### FY07 Program Expenses Breakdown



- ◆ Energy Efficiency **42%**
- ◆ Identity Theft **36%**
- ◆ Political Corruption **10%**
- ◆ Toxic Free Communities **7%**
- ◆ Food Safety **4%**
- ◆ Consumer Rights and Other **1%**

You can read more about all of the issues mentioned in this report at our Web site, [www.pirgim.org](http://www.pirgim.org). You can also find links to send an e-mail to your elected representatives and find other ways you can tell our leaders to protect the public interest.





**Steve Blackledge**  
Senior Policy Analyst

Dear PIRGIM member,

Here at PIRGIM, we take on important issues with big opposition. Sometimes that means it takes years of dogged advocacy to win.

We have recently seen some of that persistence pay off.

On issues like drug safety (see page 1), lobby reform (see page 5) and student debt (see page 7), we helped win real reforms that will help individual consumers, not powerful interests.

It's difficult to imagine what these problems that we face today would be like if it were not for the support of our members.

Thanks to all of our citizen members, PIRGIM will continue to fight for the public interest.

# FY07 ANNUAL REPORT

## PIRGIM Staff (partial list)



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