

ConnPIRG

Standing Up To Powerful Interests

Connecticut Public Interest Research Group & ConnPIRG Education Fund



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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.

ConnPIRG urged 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. Connecticut's entire congressional delegation voted in favor of the bill.

According to Paul Brown, our lead advocate on the issue, controversies surrounding the harmful side effects of drugs such as Vioxx, Paxil and Avandia left members of Congress more open to our push for reform.



Raymond Gilmartin, former CEO of Merck, announcing the recall of 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.connpirg.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 Sens. Chris Dodd and Joe Lieberman 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 ConnPIRG research on food safety and other topics on our Web site, www.connpirg.org.



Toxic-Free Communities: Safer Alternatives

Supporting Safe Chemical Facilities

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

Since 9/11, ConnPIRG has strongly supported 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, our chief advocate on the issue, submitted research and recommendations to the Department of Homeland Security in February. Alex prompted hearings on the bill in July of 2007. We earned the backing of Reps. Ed Markey (Mass.), Bennie Thompson (Miss.) and Shelia Jackson-Lee (Texas) for a strong chemical safety bill.



Each year, the threat of accidents at facilities that use and store hazardous chemicals put the lives of thousands in Connecticut at risk.

*Read more about our work on chemical safety at our Web site,
www.connpirg.org.*

Financial Privacy & Security: Identity Theft

States Led. Will Congress Reverse Them?

Connecticut 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 consumer program director, 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 Web site, www.connpirg.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 to the rules governing lobbying in a generation. 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 in August by a vote of 411 to 8. Congressional leaders on the issue relied on Gary Kalman, our democracy advocate, for his help in shaping a bill that would produce real reform. For example, his research of best practices at state ethics commissions was used in committee hearings.



ConnPIRG Democracy Advocate Gary Kalman holds a press conference calling for stronger ethics rules in the U.S. Congress.

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.connpirg.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 and the Los Angeles Times.

Unfortunately, we weren't surprised by the recalls. Our yearly holiday season survey typically finds dozens of unsafe toys, and the past year 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.connpirg.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 Connecticut'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 higher education advocate, was quoted widely in media coverage, including in Time magazine and The New York Times.



Treva McPherson III, a ConniPIRG student at the University of Connecticut (top right), joins Sen. Ted Kennedy (Mass.), Speaker Nancy Pelosi (Calif.) and Rep. George Miller (Calif.) at a ceremony to send student loan legislation to the president's desk.

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.connpirg.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 Connecticut in 2006.

ConnPIRG 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 percent. 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.



Student PIRG members meet with Sen. Chris Dodd on the campaign trail in New Hampshire in an effort to persuade presidential candidates to detail their plans on issues particularly important to young voters.

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

ConnPIRG Supporters

Citizen support is the cornerstone of ConnPIRG and the ConnPIRG Education Fund. Thousands of Connecticut citizens supported ConnPIRG 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

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

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Patrons supported ConnPIRG with contributions of \$300 - \$499.

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

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Foundations

ConnPIRG Education Fund, a 501(c)(3) organization, conducts research and public education on emerging public interest issues. Contributions to ConnPIRG Education Fund are tax-deductible. ConnPIRG Education Fund received recent grant awards from:

- Carnegie Corporation of New York
- John Merck Fund
- The Institute for College Access and Success
- Young Voter Strategies

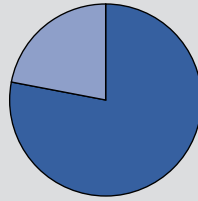
Planned Giving

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

Financial Information

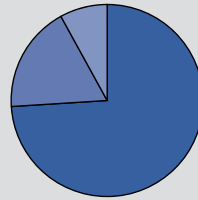
Charts reflect FY07 financial information for ConnPIRG and the ConnPIRG Education Fund.

FY07 Income



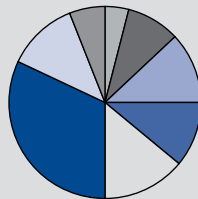
- ◆ Citizen Contributions **78%**
- ◆ Student Chapters **22%**

FY07 Expenses



- ◆ Program **74%**
- ◆ Fundraising **18%**
- ◆ Administration **8%**

FY07 Program Expenses Breakdown



- ◆ Toxic Free Communities **32%**
- ◆ Toy and Food Safety **12%**
- ◆ Higher Education **12%**
- ◆ Lobby and Media Reform **11%**
- ◆ Health Care and Rx Drugs **9%**
- ◆ Voting and Democracy **6%**
- ◆ Financial Privacy and Security **4%**
- ◆ Other **14%**

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Please visit our Web site, www.connpirg.org, to read the latest research and reports from our top priority campaigns and take action to ensure that our leaders are standing up in the public's interest.





Andy MacDonald
Organizing
Director

Dear ConnPIRG member,

ConnPIRG's nearly 35 years of advocacy on a range of issues has produced real results. We've won victories for public health, protected consumers from rip-offs, and strengthened our democracy. When powerful special interests have stood in the way of reform, ConnPIRG has stepped into the fray to defend the public interest.

By now, I'm sure you've heard the exciting news about the new home of ConnPIRG's environmental work—Environment Connecticut. While our colleagues at Environment Connecticut continue our proud legacy of progress for the environment, ConnPIRG will remain the strong advocate for Connecticut's families on issues like health care, affordable higher education, identity theft, ethics and more. It couldn't be a more important time for there to be a stronger, more-focused voice for Connecticut's families.

Andy MacDonald

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**Standing Up
To Powerful Interests**

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