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State PIRG Alumni Network

State PIRG Alumni Newsletter • Spring 2007

Moving Forward In The New Congress

The U.S. Congress wrapped up the first 100 hours of the legislative session with landmark progress on several U.S. PIRG-supported measures. U.S. PIRG federal advocates and field organizers worked hard to ensure not only that these policies were front-and-center on the first 100 hours agenda, but that the public could celebrate some real action by the end of this first phase of the new Congress. They then drove it home during the annual February lobby day. Some highlights include:

• House passes CLEAN Energy Act with 100-Vote Majority

On Jan. 18, the House of Representatives voted 264 to 163 to pass the CLEAN (Creating Long-Term Energy Alternatives for the Nation) Energy Act of 2007 to invest more than \$14 billion in renewable energy and energy efficiency. The bipartisan bill would create a strategic clean energy fund by repealing some tax breaks and royalty relief for the oil industry.

To secure the victory, U.S. PIRG advocates organized a day of action on Capitol Hill with more than 70 additional advocates from 15 national environmental groups to lobby in support of the bill, and U.S. PIRG field organizers successfully targeted

a number of Republican votes in their districts.

Since then, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has gone further and created a new Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming chaired by Congressman Ed Markey of Massachusetts, a longtime PIRG champ.

• House Votes to Lower Interest Rates for Student Loans and Increase Grant Aid

The House of Representatives passed legislation on Jan. 11 to lower the interest rates on student loans over the next five years, and then on Jan. 31 voted to increase the maximum Pell Grant award by \$260 to \$4,310.

The first bill will lower interest rates on subsidized Stafford student loans and should help the average low- or middle-income borrower avoid \$2,300 in debt.

PIRG student leaders played a big role in the victories: Rutgers student and NJPIRG Student Chapters Board Chair **Sarah Clader** spoke at the press conference in Washington lauding the passage of the interest rates bill, and Rep. Joe Courtney of

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MAKING COLLEGE AFFORDABLE—*Arizona PIRG* chapter students and Lead Organizer **Erin Eccleston** met with Speaker Nancy Pelosi after an *Arizona PIRG*-sponsored event on college affordability.

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Chances are there's a 2007 alumni gathering near you!

Campaign Highlights

Pristine North Carolina River Protected

On Jan. 11, the North Carolina Environmental Management Commission approved the reclassification of the North Fork First Broad River as an Outstanding Resource Water. This classification ensures that as growth and development occur in the watershed, the river will be protected from pollution caused by runoff, wastewater discharges and other sources.

“The reclassifying of the North Fork First Broad River is an excellent example of what citizens can do to protect their local rivers and streams,” says Environment North Carolina Director **Elizabeth Ouzts**.

The North Fork First Broad River, located in northern Rutherford County, is home to unspoiled water, as well as rare animal and plant populations. Environment North Carolina and Concerned Citizens of Rutherford County worked together to ensure that the river will remain pristine by gathering public comments, organizing a broader coalition of local businesses and organizations, and making sure the issue was highlighted in the media. ■

Coloradans To Get A Better Deal On Rx Drugs

CoPIRG State Director **Rex Wilmouth** joined Colorado Gov. Bill Ritter in late January as Gov. Ritter announced a

CoPIRG-backed executive order to create a preferred drug list and investigate a prescription drug buying pool for the state. These actions will allow Coloradans to leverage their collective purchasing power to get a better deal on prescription medication.

CoPIRG has long advocated that Colorado reduce the cost of prescription drugs. Currently, uninsured consumers in Colorado pay 77 percent more on average than the federal government pays for 12 common prescription medications and twice as much as they would pay if they purchased the same drugs from a Canadian pharmacy.

CoPIRG will continue to advocate a prescription drug buying pool to make healthcare affordable for more Coloradans. ■

Pacific Seafood Must Pay For Polluting

Pacific Seafood, the third largest seafood company in North America, was hit with economic sanctions totaling \$1.8 million for its longtime pollution of the Skipanon River, a tributary of the Columbia River. The sanctions—in the form of penalties, restoration payments, and lost profits—came as a result of a lawsuit filed by the National Environmental Law Center (NELC) on behalf of the Oregon State PIRG (OSPIRG).

NELC attorneys filed the lawsuit in 2002 on behalf of OSPIRG



NCPIRG Advocate Rob Thompson meets with North Carolina Congressman Walter Jones during U.S. PIRG's federal lobby day.

and two local residents, who had grown concerned about Pacific Seafood's years of illegal wastewater discharges at its Warren-ton, Ore. processing plant.

The plant's high-strength wastewater often caused dissolved oxygen levels in the Skipanon River to drop to levels low enough to kill salmon and other aquatic life.

NELC Litigation Director **Chuck Caldart** reports that the company finally agreed to penalties and restoration payments, a comprehensive compliance program, and company-wide environmental training as a result of the legal action. ■

Federal Lobby Day A Huge Success

On Feb. 13 and 14, PIRG and environment group advocates from around the country joined D.C. staff for U.S. PIRG's annual

federal lobby day. U.S. PIRG's **Kate Rube** reports that more than 100 PIRG staff held 390 meetings with members of Congress and their staff. One hundred ten of those meetings were with members of Congress, a PIRG lobby day record.

Among the results: Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin invited Illinois PIRG's **Brian Imus** to join him for a news conference on campaign finance reform; House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's staff asked Environment California's **Dan Jacobson** to participate in a Bay Area roundtable on global warming; 15 House members agreed to cosponsor a renewable energy bill; and seven new members signed onto a global warming bill.

When Environment Iowa's **Alana Stamas** asked Sen. Tom Harkin of Iowa to support a 15 percent renewable electricity standard, he replied, “Wait, can't we do better than that?” ■

Alumni Profiles

Kate Canada: Reproductive Rights Advocate

As Director of Communications and Public Policy for Planned Parenthood of Maryland, **Kate (Strouse) Canada** focuses both on development work and much of the lobbying for this state-based organization.

Since Maryland already has fairly strong laws protecting women's reproductive healthcare, Kate is motivated to further Planned Parenthood's involvement in broader healthcare advocacy work. In particular, she's excited to join in the fight to expand Medicaid eligibility to all low-income Marylanders.

A graduate of Hobart and William Smith Colleges (along with Fund for Public Interest Re-

search and Green Century Funds alumnus **Tom Subak**, also an employee of Planned Parenthood), Kate began her career back in 1999 as the U.S.PIRG Midwest field organizer.

Kate then directed the Cleveland canvass office alongside alumna **Carolyn Whipple** and was part of the first bird-dogging team to go to the Iowa caucuses, where Kate and alumni **Amber Hard** and **Bill Holland** urged Al Gore, Libby Dole and others to protect the remaining pristine acres of our national forests.

After later serving as Ohio-PIRG's consumer fellow, Kate moved to Rhode Island in 2002 and restarted RIPIRG. On top of

work on energy efficiency, clean air, healthcare, and identity theft, a highlight of Kate's tenure with RIPIRG was passing what was then the nation's strongest Renewable Portfolio Standard.

When Kate moved to Maryland in 2004, she turned over the reins to **Matt Auten**, now Environment Rhode Island's advocate. To many alumni, Kate may be best known for her role as the head Aspen organizer, where she worked to ensure that staff and alumni enjoyed an excellent vacation.

Kate often bumps into Environment Maryland and Maryland-PIRG staff **Brad Heavner** and **Johanna Neumann** at the state



Kate Strouse Canada and John Harris in Aspen, 2002.

Capitol and Frontier Group staffer **Elizabeth Riddlington** around Baltimore. Kate lives with her husband in Baltimore and can be reached at kate-canada@msn.com. ■

Ben Prochazka: Fighting Genocide In Darfur



Ben Prochazka and Darren Speece at the 2006 D.C. alumni gathering.

Though **Ben Prochazka's** early career plans involved becoming a professional athlete, it was through the Fund for Public Interest Research that he eventually started his career.

Starting as a canvasser in Boston, Ben was interviewed by then Regional Director **Surf del Mar** and learned how to canvass alongside directors (and current alumnae) **Karen Sherwood** and **Lorie Bailey**. By the summer of 1997, he was directing the Norfolk, Va. office and then went on to run canvasses in New Mexico, Utah, California and Oregon.

He went on to work alongside current National Assistant Campus Organizing Director **Andy MacDonald** and alumnae **Julie Sutor**, **Heather Smith**, **Erin Casey**, **Rachel Heller** and **Beka Economopoulos** to organize EConference 2001. Ben then served as the U.S.PIRG Western States Field Organizer for two years before becoming the Colorado State Director of the state PIRGs' New Voters Project in 2003.

Today Ben is the Campaign Manager for the Save Darfur Coalition. In this role, Ben has

already helped to orchestrate the coalition's "Million Voices for Darfur" campaign, as well as two enormous rallies which garnered hundreds of stories in the media. Currently, Ben is working to launch the coalition's divestment campaign as well as a series of "Global Days for Darfur" from April 23 to 30, 2007.

Based in Washington, D.C., Ben also sings and plays in a band, the Limbic Roots. He lives with his wife, alumna **Alana Campbell**, and their dog, also named Ben, and can be reached at ben@savedarfur.org. ■



Alumnus Chris Sdao and family.

Weddings and Babies:

Former canvass director **Tim Breeze-Thorndike** married Rebecca Thorndike last summer at a ceremony in Youngstown, Ohio. The couple resides in the Boston area, where Tim works as a math textbook editor.

Alumna **Liz Delleart Raiberti** and her husband Charles are about to celebrate a first birthday with their daughter, Lily Paige.

Alumnus **Ivan Frishberg** and U.S.PIRG advocate **Christy**

Leavitt welcomed Lucia Amelia Frishberg Leavitt to the world on Feb. 21.

Current political department staffer **Kimberly Larson** and her husband Scott Edwards celebrated the birth of Miles Robert Edwards on Nov. 8.

Former canvass director **Chris Sdao** and his wife Gina recently welcomed their second child, Louis Jeffrey Sdao, into the world.

Alumni Updates

CALPIRG alum **Bill Shireman** and his wife Aileen welcomed twins Kazuo and Elisa into the world on Jan. 21 — Bill’s birthday.

Movers and Shakers:

COPIRG alum and longtime consumer advocate **Ron Binz** was appointed by Gov. Bill Ritter in January as the new chair of the Colorado Public Utilities Commission.

Alumna **Heidi Blankenship** is in the middle of one year in Sweden working on a Master’s in Leadership Toward Sustainability.

In his new tenure as Gulf Region Outreach Manager for The Ocean Conservancy, former canvass director **Bill Blome** is fighting hard for healthier oceans.

Alumna **Stephanie (Gros) Carter** just began her new career as an ER nurse in Austin, Texas.

Three PIRG alumni were quoted in one single L.A. Times article on Jan. 31: **Cathy Duvall**, **Dan Becker** and **Navin Nayak** were all sought out to comment on the new political climate surrounding the issue of global warming.

NYPIRG alumna **Judy Enck** was newly appointed by Gov. Eliot Spitzer as Deputy Secretary for the Environment where she will serve as the governor’s senior advisor on environmental issues.

Former canvass director **Frank Femia** recently completed his Masters in European Politics and Governance at the London School of Economics and will be working in D.C. for ConnectUS, a project that seeks to push U.S. foreign policy in a more progressive direction.

Former canvass director **Marisa Guptarak** recently began working as an Outreach Educator for the NYC Department of Health’s Cardiovascular Disease Program.

New Babies



Lily Paige Raiberti



Kazuo and Elisa Shireman



Miles Robert Edwards



Lucia Amelia Frishberg Leavitt

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She is working to develop programs and workshops in central Brooklyn related to lifestyle and health screenings and to create technical assistance for restaurants seeking to comply with the city's new trans fats ban.

Longtime Green Corps alumna **Sarah Hodgdon** recently joined the senior management team at the Sierra Club as the Deputy

Field Director for Operations.

On Jan. 20, Green Corps alumnus **Aaron Jackson Sanger** was featured in the Santiago Times for his work protecting Chilean forests with ForestEthics.

Alumna **Susannah Lindberg-Randolph** recently joined ACORN as their Florida Political Director. Both she and her husband are already looking forward to Aspen 2007!

MASSPIRG, Fund and National Environmental Law Center alumnus and Green Century Funds trustee **Bill Ryan** recently founded Moving Tiger energy exercise system and encourages PIRGers in the Boston area to check it out.

As Equality Texas' new Political Director, CALPIRG alumnus **Randall Terrell** is working in the Legislature to defeat discrimination against LGBT Texans. ■

Federal Victories

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Connecticut joined Conn-PIRG's **Trea McPherson** before the vote in speaking out in favor of the cut in interest rates.

• Senate Passes Strong Lobby Reform

After overcoming a filibuster that threatened to derail an ethics and lobby reform bill, senators voted overwhelmingly in January to pass strong lobby reform measures. The bill, which now heads to the House, includes a ban on gifts to elected officials, tighter rules to eliminate legislative junkets and new restrictions on the use of corporate jets by members of Congress.

There are also restrictions on legislators seeking to cash in on their influence when moving to the private sector and greater disclosure of earmarks, stealth coalitions and the bundling of campaign contributions by wealthy interests.

U.S. PIRG Democracy Advocate **Gary Kalman** played a key role leading up to the victory, providing draft language for some provisions in the bill and helping to define for what reform we should be fighting. ■

Green Century Funds Introduce Lower Fees

Founded by the PIRGs in 1991, the Green Century Funds is the first family of no-load environmentally responsible mutual funds. Have you been considering investing? This news may make the decision easier:

Both the Green Century Balanced Fund and the Green Century Equity Fund cut their total annual expenses last August.* The decision to reduce the expenses, in an effort to attract more investors, followed analyses done by Green Century Capital Management's **Kris Curtis** and **Erin Gray** and the Fund for Public Interest Research's **Kirk Weinert**. To find out more, visit www.greencentury.com.

Also new: The Equity Fund is now the only mutual fund invested in one of the best known socially responsible indexes, the Domini 400 SocialSM Index. For the past 16 years, the Domini Index has screened out companies with poor records on environmental, social and governance issues. The Equity Fund, like many other mutual funds in-

vested primarily in stocks, carries the risk of investing in the stock market. The large companies in which the Equity Fund's portfolio is invested may perform worse than the stock market as a whole.

Green Century continues its tradition of advocating more responsible corporate behavior begun by its founding President and alumna **Mindy Lubber**. The firm is organizing at several major corporations this year to require disclosure of political contributions, demand publication of sustainability reports and advocate for improved disclosure of chemical and toxics risks. Advocacy Director **Andrew Shalit** led Green Century in filing resolutions at over 17 companies last year, with several agreeing to our demands.

The Green Century Funds are governed by a Board of Trustees, including **Doug Phelps**, **Wendy Wendlandt** and alumnus **Bill Ryan**.

You should carefully consider the Green Century Funds' investment

objectives, risks, charges and expenses before investing. To obtain a prospectus that contains this and other information about the Funds, call 1-800-93-GREEN, visit www.greencentury.com, or e-mail info@greencentury.com. Please read the prospectus carefully before you invest or send money.

**Green Century Capital Management (Green Century), the investment advisor and administrator of each Fund, pays the operating expenses of the Funds (excluding interest, taxes, brokerage costs and other capital expenses and any extraordinary expenses). For this and other services, each Fund pays Green Century an Administrative Fee and an Advisory Fee at rates such that the Equity Fund's total annual expenses are limited to 0.95% of the Equity Fund's average net assets and the Balanced Fund's total annual expenses are limited to 1.38% of the Balanced Fund's average net assets.*

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Do You Know These Alumni?

PIRG, Fund and affiliated organizations' alumni are everywhere! Thousands of people have worked for these organizations over the past 35 years. We'd like to stay in touch with each one of them.

Unfortunately we've lost track of many alumni. Below is a short list of people for whom we have no contact information. If you know how to reach these people, contact **Kirsten Schatz** at alumni@pirg.org or (303) 575-5885, x 331. To see a longer list of "missing" alumni visit: <http://www.pirg.org/alumni/lostalumni.html>.

- **Tim Schaffer**, 2001-2002, MOPIRG Canvass
- **Emily Deckman**, 2000-2002, CALPIRG and OSPIRG
- **Jenny Martinez**, MASSPIRG
- **Brandy Peterson**, Late 90s, MASSPIRG Canvass
- **Sue O'Rourke**, Late 90s, Publications
- **Eric Ludwig**, Late 90s, OSPIRG
- **Dawn Abrams**, Late 90s, WISPIRG and WashPIRG Canvass
- **Jim O'Brien**, MASSPIRG
- **Chuck Muenzberg**, Early 90s, COPIRG
- **Stacey Berger**, Early 90s, NJPIRG Canvass
- **Michelle Miller**, Early 90s, CALPIRG Canvass
- **Yolanda Carabollo**, NJPIRG
- **Sandra Davis**, Late 80s, CALPIRG and MASSPIRG
- **Laura Scanlan**, Late 80s, MASSPIRG and TOP
- **Tim Bennett**, Late 80s, CALPIRG
- **Steven Phillips**, Late 80s, D.C. Canvass
- **Sharon Painter Johnson**, Late 80s, FloridaPIRG
- **Becky Anderson**, Mid 80s, COPIRG
- **Chris Daniels**, Mid 80s, WashPIRG
- **Patty Worklan**, Early 80s, MASSPIRG
- **Dan Mulholland**, early 70s, OSPIRG

Current Career Opportunities With the State PIRGs And Affiliated Organizations

For more information, please visit www.uspirg.org/jobs or call Dana Dorman at 215-985-1113.

• National Environmental Program Coordinator, U.S. PIRG

Location: Washington, DC; Denver, CO; or Boston, MA

Develop and enhance the organization's capacity to impact significant policy changes on environmental issues. Advise PIRG and state environment group policy advocates at the state and federal levels, draft model legislation, build political support, reach out to the media, and fundraise for our environmental program.

• Federal Program Communications Staff, U.S. PIRG

Location: Washington, DC

Expand visibility and resources for the PIRG network by garnering media coverage for U.S. PIRG's federal program work. Organize press conferences and briefings; pitch stories to reporters, producers and other journalists; work with program staff to develop messaging and write, edit and place opinion pieces; and manage press lists.

• Program Director, PennPIRG

Location: Philadelphia, PA

Lead and oversee PennPIRG's work on consumer and taxpayer policy in Pennsylvania. Develop winning campaigns, conduct research, create policy solutions, lobby, cultivate relationships with media and coalition partners, fundraise, and recruit and train PennPIRG staff and volunteers.

• Community Organizer, Toxics Action Center

Location: Boston, MA; Providence, RI; or Hartford, CT

Provide training and strategic assistance to communities fighting toxic pollution. Assist 8-10 neighborhood groups per year on their local campaigns; write grants and create other fundraising opportunities; assist with other trainings and conferences; and more.

• Advocate, Environment New Mexico

Location: Albuquerque, NM

Conduct research, create policy solutions, lobby, cultivate relationships with media and coalitions, and fundraise for Environment New Mexico's programs.

Familiar Face Joins Recruitment Team

After nearly two decades as a Regional Director with the Fund for Public Interest Research, **Surf del Mar** (a.k.a. Jeff Sprague) recently made the move from Boston to Denver to become the new Director of Ongoing Entry-level Recruitment.

Surf's career began after he was recruited by U.S.PIRG Energy Program Director **Rob Sargent** at a table at the University of Vermont in 1987.

Working alongside alumni **Christine Quinn** and **Matt Wilson**, Surf served as assistant director in the Hartford, Conn. canvass office before eventually moving on to become regional director for New England and, later, for other parts of the Northeast and for Florida.

One of Surf's favorite campaign memories from his time on the canvass team was the 1988 Campaign for Safe Energy, where he ran the Back Bay, Mass. canvass office in the attempt to shut down the state's aging nuclear power plants.

Another highlight was helping to organize the 2005 Aspen vacation and getting to catch up with all of his alumni friends who attended.

In his new role, Surf is excited to reach out to recent college graduates looking to do something good with their lives by letting them know about career opportunities with the PIRGs, the Fund for Public Interest Research, and other affiliated organizations.



Surf del Mar

While he's enjoying getting to know the Denver community of PIRG staff and alumni, he's somewhat dismayed by the cold, ice and snow, which he thought he'd left behind in New England. Surf can be reached at surf@ffpir.org. ■

In Memory Of:

The PIRG family lost two dear friends in December 2006: **David Wood**, former general counsel at the Fund for Public Interest Research, and **Jacques Phelps, Jr.**, financial department alumnus.

- A fund has been established for David's daughters. Contributions can be made to the Emma and Malena Fund, c/o alumna **Kerry Schumann**, Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters, 306 E. Wilson St, #2E, Madison, WI 53703.

- Jacques is survived by son **Doug Phelps**, Chairman and President of U.S.PIRG, grandson **Chris Phelps**, current CONPIRG advocate, and Chris' wife, alumna **Hilary Phelps**.

Additional Nonprofit Career Opportunities

Check out these career opportunities around the country. For more information, please visit each organization's Web site. To list job openings, e-mail alumni@pirg.org.

- Work alongside alumni like **Beth Lowell** and **Beth Kemler** as Oceana's Fisheries Advocate or Federal Policy Director in D.C. Send cover letter, resumé and salary requirements to resumes@oceana.org.
- Work with alumnus **Tom Mooers** as the Field Director for Sierra Watch in Nevada City, CA. Send cover letter, resumé, writing sample and references to tmooers@sierrawatch.org.
- Work with alumna **Melissa Waage** as the Public Lands Program Director for the Center for Biological Diversity in the Intermountain West. Send resumé, cover letter, writing samples and references to Peter Galvin at pgalvin@biologicaldiversity.org.
- Work as the Immigrant Rights Project Director with the Asian Pacific American Legal Center in L.A. Send cover letter, resumé, writing sample and three employment references to: Karin Wang at kwang@apalc.org.
- Work with alumni **Mindy Lubber**, **Rob Berridge**, **Rachel Harold** and **Andrew Logan** as Corporate Accountability Program Director with Ceres in Boston. Send cover letter, resumé and references to careers@ceres.org.

Save The Date: Upcoming Alumni Events

Alumni and staff are gathering in cities across the country to catch up with old friends and meet some new faces from the PIRG family. For more details on upcoming events and photos from past events, visit www.pirg.org/alumni/calendar.html. If you'd like to help organize an alumni get-together near you, contact Kirsten Schatz at alumni@pirg.org or 303-573-5885 x331.

Madison, WI Contact Dan Kohler: dankohler@wispirg.org	April, 6, 2007
Albuquerque, NM Contact Jeanne Bassett: jeanne@environmentnewmexico.org	April 14, 2007
Los Angeles, CA Contact Ruthie Seroussi: ruthie@mikeandruthie.com	April 21, 2007
Boston, MA Contact Tonya Sabo: tsabo@masspirg.org	April 30, 2007
Minneapolis, MN Contact Ed Johnson: edjffpir@aol.com	June 29, 2007
Columbus, OH Contact Erin Bowser: ebowser@environmentohio.org	July 12, 2007
Portland, ME Contact Jennifer Anderson: jennifer@environmentmaine.org	July 13, 2007
Atlanta, GA Contact Jennette Gayer: jennette@environmentgeorgia.org	Aug. 2, 2007
Aspen, CO Eligible career alumni should save these dates for this year's Aspen Vacation!	Dec. 14-22, 2007



Fellow Margaret Hartzell, alumnus Rusty Painter, Environment North Carolina Director Elizabeth Ouzts, & alumnus Brian Buzby at the January 2007 Chapel Hill alumni happy hour.

The State PIRG Alumni Network
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Denver, CO 80202
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