

Voices

Public Citizen 30 Years

Public Citizen has worked to protect democracy and the health, safety and pocketbooks of consumers through Congress, the Executive Branch and the Judiciary. Here are some of our many highlights from 1971 through the present.

Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.)



“Public Citizen has been a powerful and persistent voice for cleaning up our campaign finance system, which has corrupted our legislative process and distorted government policies. The group continues to fight for average citizens whose voices are muted by the monied special interests.”

Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.)



“For thirty years, Public Citizen has made an enormous difference on issues ranging from car safety to campaign finance reform, and it continues to be an independent and invaluable voice on the most important issues debated in Congress.”

1971

Public Citizen founded by Ralph Nader as an organization dedicated to protecting health, safety and democracy.



1972

Public Citizen files lawsuit resulting in new compensation system for airline passengers on overbooked flights.

Public Citizen plays key role in creation of the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

1973

In response to Public Citizen's suit, President Nixon's firing of Watergate Prosecutor Archibald Cox is ruled illegal.

1974

Public Citizen persuades Congress to override President Ford's veto and pass major improvements to the Freedom of Information Act.

1975

Public Citizen successfully lobbies Congress for energy conservation laws, including fuel economy requirements for cars.



Public Citizen wins Supreme Court ruling forbidding lawyers and other professionals from price fixing.

1976

FDA bans Red Dye #2 after Public Citizen's four-year campaign.

A Public Citizen petition leads to FDA ban on use of cancer-causing chloroform in cough medicines and toothpaste.

1977

Public Citizen challenges the airline industry's failure to provide adequate seating for non-smokers.

Public Citizen mobilizes citizens who persuade President Carter to halt construction of the Clinch River breeder reactor.

1978

Public Citizen is instrumental in stopping the spraying of DDT in airline passenger cabins to control Japanese beetles on California-bound flights.

Congress passes Public Citizen's National Consumer Cooperative Bill, authorizing \$300 million in seed money for consumer cooperatives.

1979

A Public Citizen petition leads to an Environmental Protection Agency ban on use of DBCP, a pesticide proven to cause sterility in men.

from Capitol Hill

Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.)



“Public Citizen stands on the side of social justice and consumer protection. Thanks to your unceasing vigilance, America is safer, more just and more honest for all who live here. On behalf of the state of California, thank you for your passion and your commitment to improving the lives of all Americans.”

Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr. (D-Ill.)



“Public Citizen has, through thirty years of dedicated and sacrificial public service, built an outstanding reputation and pursued a noble mission — the building of a more perfect Union. My most direct involvement with Public Citizen is through its Global Trade Watch. Together, along with many others, we advanced the Human rights, Opportunity, Partnership and Empowerment Act — or the Hope for Africa Act, which contained environment and human rights protections — as an alternative to the corporate-oriented African Growth and Opportunity Act. With the rightward and corporate-dominated shift in the country’s politics, by both Democrats and Republicans, a Public Citizen is needed now more than ever. The American people are depending on you to help keep hope alive.”

Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.)



“Public Citizen is an effective voice protecting the fundamental rights of all Americans, and I commend them for their vigilance, their leadership, and their impressive representation of the public interest over the past three decades. It’s been a privilege to work closely with them on key issues, such as the ongoing battles to make prescription drugs affordable, to hold the tobacco industry accountable for its actions, and to make health care a basic right for all our citizens.”

Rep. David Bonior (D-Mich.)



“In the struggle for social justice, the rights of consumers, and the accountability of government and corporations, Public Citizen has improved the lives of all Americans. Congratulations on an impressive thirty years. I look forward to working with you in the years to come.”

1979

Public Citizen helps defeat legislation that would have raised sugar price supports, thereby saving consumers \$300 million per year.

1980

Public Citizen plays a critical role in the passage of the Superfund law, which requires cleanup of toxic waste sites.



Public Citizen lawsuit forces government to keep records of closed-door proceedings of Chrysler bailout.

Public Citizen publishes *Pills That Don't Work*, a guide to ineffective medications.

1981

Public Citizen helps thwart President Reagan’s attempts to abolish the Clean Air Act and diminish the authority of the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

1982

The arthritis drug Oralflex is withdrawn from the market after Public Citizen exposes deaths and injuries caused by the drug.

After an extensive Public Citizen campaign, cancer-causing urea formaldehyde is banned in home insulation.

1983

Public Citizen wins historic separation of powers case; Supreme Court strikes down legislative veto.

Public Citizen founds Buyers Up to help consumers buy affordable home heating oil.

1983

Public Citizen participates in landmark Supreme Court decision overturning President Reagan’s revocation of auto safety standards for automatic restraints (air bags).

Public Citizen releases *Over The Counter Pills That Don't Work*, a guide to ineffective and dangerous medications; and *Representing Yourself*, a guide to how citizens can deal with the legal system without hiring an attorney.



1984

Public Citizen wins a court order forcing EPA to recall 700,000 GM cars with faulty emission controls.

Following AT&T’s divestiture, Public Citizen mounts a nationwide “Campaign for Affordable Phones,” opposing rate hikes for residential customers.

1985

FDA requires a Reye's Syndrome warning for children on aspirin labels after a three-year campaign by Public Citizen.



Public Citizen reveals the locations of more than 250 work sites nationwide where workers have been exposed to hazardous chemicals.

1986

Public Citizen wins court order forbidding the president from stopping expenditure of appropriated funds without express authorization from Congress.

Congress requires health warning labels on chewing tobacco and snuff, capping Public Citizen's two-year campaign.

1987

Public Citizen helps persuade Congress to pass legislation restricting the time banks can hold checks.

1988

After seven years of litigation by Public Citizen, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) imposes standards for exposure to cancer-causing ethylene oxide.

Public Citizen sells 400,000 copies of *Worst Pills, Best Pills*, a consumer guide to dangerous and ineffective drugs and their alternatives.



1989

Public Citizen helps persuade California voters to shut down the Rancho Seco nuclear plant.

1989

Public Citizen obtains court order forcing the FDA to require labels warning women that high-absorbency tampons are more likely to cause Toxic Shock Syndrome.

Public Citizen and Ralph Nader stop the \$45,500 congressional pay raise, forcing Congress to take a smaller raise and ban honoraria.

1992



OSHA imposes a standard to protect workers from cadmium, linked to lung cancer and kidney damage, after Public Citizen wins a court order.



PUBLIC CITIZEN MOVES INTO NEW HEADQUARTERS* IN 1994

* purchased at half price during S&L firesale

1990

A Public Citizen court victory forces the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to require training for nuclear plant workers.

Public Citizen releases *Who Robbed America?*, a citizen's guide to the savings and loan scandal that cost taxpayers billions of dollars.

1991

Public Citizen plays key role in passage of new auto and truck safety law requiring air bags and head injury protections, and limiting the expansion of triple-rigs.

Public Citizen publishes *They Love to Fly . . . And It Shows*, exposing House members who took nearly 4,000 privately funded trips in 1989-90.

1993



Public Citizen wins a landmark court victory that prevents destruction of the electronic records of the White House under Reagan, Bush and Clinton.

Public Citizen plays a leading role in opposing the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), launching a new progressive citizens' trade movement.

1993

Public Citizen plays major role in passage of comprehensive campaign finance reforms in House and Senate; never sent to president.

1994

Public Citizen helps to enlist more than 100 co-sponsors for a single-payer health care reform bill modeled after the Canadian system.

Public Citizen helps win legislation protecting consumers from home equity scams.

1995

Public Citizen successfully defends tobacco industry whistleblower who released key documents to Congress and the FDA, against civil damages and criminal contempt charges.

Congressional gift ban and lobbying registration reform enacted after a major Public Citizen campaign.



1996

Public Citizen wins Supreme Court decision upholding the right of people injured by defective medical devices to sue for compensation.

Public Citizen forges historic settlement to secure release of Nixon's White House tapes after 15 years of litigation.

Public Citizen successfully opposes legislation mandating transport of nuclear waste to Yucca Mountain in Nevada.

“THERE IS NOTHING BEYOND THE REACH OF ORDINARY CITIZENS DOING THE DAILY WORK OF DEMOCRACY, AND NO PROBLEM TOO GREAT TO TACKLE WITH THE POWER OF ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP.”



— Joan Claybrook, President
Public Citizen
1982-present

1997

Public Citizen leads multi-year campaign that results in defeat of damaging Fast Track trade authority.

1998

Public Citizen releases latest compilation of 16,638 *Questionable Doctors*, the only publicly available, nationwide list of disciplined doctors.



Public Citizen helps win passage of legislation mandating safer air bags to protect women and children.

Public Citizen helps stop a damaging products liability bill limiting access of injured consumers to the courts.

Public Citizen helps lead a global citizens' campaign that results in the scuttling of the Multilateral Agreement on Investments, a proposed global investment treaty.

1999

Public Citizen works successfully to pass major truck safety legislation, which creates the new Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

1999

Public Citizen launches the third edition of its best-selling *Worst Pills, Best Pills* (2 million copies of previous editions sold).



Public Citizen helps organize massive citizen protest of the World Trade Organization in Seattle and publishes *Whose Trade Organization?*, a critical study of the WTO's track record.

Public Citizen lobbies for campaign reform bill banning corrupting “soft money” that passes the GOP-controlled House by wide margin.

2000

Public Citizen efforts lead to ban on deadly diabetes drug Rezulin.

Public Citizen successfully leads coalition to enact new auto safety law in wake of recall of 6.5 million Firestone tires.

