Identity Theft

After Equifax, What’s Next?

On Sept. 7, 2017, the reality of our modern financial system became clearer than ever before when the credit bureau Equifax announced that it had been hacked, potentially compromising the personal data of 143 million Americans (later updated to 145.5 million).

Since then, our advocates, both nationwide and at the state level, have worked to persuade Equifax, Congress and state lawmakers to take stronger action to protect consumers from identity theft and fraud.

According to research by CoPIRG Foundation, it would cost consumers an estimated $4.1 billion to freeze their credit reports at all three agencies in states where fees are charged.

We did not give the credit bureaus permission to collect our information, sell it or, in the case of Equifax, lose it. So why should we have to pay to control access to our reports?

Consumers Need Control

That’s why our national network has led the push for free credit freezes for all Americans. When Congress held hearings to investigate Equifax’s wrongdoing, CoPIRG advocates Ed Mierzwinski and Mike Litt testified in support of stronger consumer protections, including free credit freezes.

Our state staff are working on similar efforts to pass free freeze bills in California, Illinois, Massachusetts and other states.

We’re going to keep getting the media to cover this important story, and send critical resources to the people who are most likely to be affected by identity theft as a result of the data breach—including members of the armed forces, senior citizens and students.

With your support, we won’t let up until Equifax is held fully responsible and consumers have strong protections against identity theft in place.

Standing Up For Our Consumer Watchdog

Six years ago, CoPIRG helped create the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to make sure banks and financial companies treat us fairly and play by the rules. Since then, the bureau has returned nearly $12 billion to ripped-off consumers.

Yet President Trump and some in Congress are trying to strip away vital consumer protections, and even eliminate the Consumer Bureau. That’s why we knocked on more than 300,000 doors across the country last summer, mobilizing more than 60,000 citizens to sign our petition to Congress.

In November, when Richard Cordray stepped down as director of the Consumer Bureau and the president named staunch CFPB opponent Mick Mulvaney as acting director, we doubled down on our efforts to ensure the agency stays strong and independent. With support from members like you, we’ll fight tooth and nail to ensure this important agency continues to thrive in the future.
Public Health

We’re Making Progress On Protecting Antibiotics

Fourteen of the top 25 chain restaurants in the U.S. have taken steps to restrict the routine use of antibiotics in the chicken they serve, according to a scorecard released in September by CoPIRG Foundation and our allies.

CoPIRG Foundation is paying close attention to this important step toward an electric vehicle future, and we’ve submitted comments that we think will help make the plan even more comprehensive.

The third annual Chain Reaction report, which grades companies on their antibiotics policies and practices, found that while restaurant chains made great progress on chicken, there were no new commitments to limit antibiotic use in beef and pork.

With support from our members, we’ll continue encouraging the largest chains in these industries to act to protect public health.

Transportation

Colorado Adopts First-Ever Electric Vehicle Plan

The Washington Post has called Colorado the best place in the country to buy a new electric car, and with this year’s adoption of the Colorado Electric Vehicle Plan, our state is working to become one of the best places to drive one.

In 2016, nearly three in four Fortune 500 companies maintained subsidiaries in offshore tax havens, according to the report, “Offshore Shell Games.” Through these tax havens, Fortune 500 companies are avoiding up to $752 billion in U.S. taxes, and small businesses and regular Americans are often left to pick up this tab.

To end tax haven abuse, Congress should end incentives for companies to shift profits offshore, close the most egregious offshore loopholes, strengthen tax enforcement, and increase transparency.

Transportation

Bustang Ridership Jumps By More Than Half

If you build it, they will ride.

This year, the Bustang inter-regional bus service saw ridership jump by 52 percent over its inaugural year. CoPIRG Foundation was there on Bustang’s two-year anniversary to celebrate the success of mass transit in our state and push for bringing the long-overdue service to more Coloradans.

Forty-one mayors and county commissioners signed our letter applauding Bustang—which provided nearly 156,000 passenger trips this year—and called for more service. Bustang—which connects Denver to Fort Collins, Colorado Springs and Glenwood Springs—brings us a step closer to a 21st century transportation system that doesn’t require people to rely on individual, fossil-fueled cars to get around.

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Thanks To You

Dear CoPIRG member,

We’ve always stood up for everyday Americans when their health or well-being is at risk, and the last few months were no different.

After Equifax was hacked, CoPIRG Foundation immediately got information into consumers’ hands on how to protect themselves, and CoPIRG led the call for free credit freezes for all. After CoPIRG Foundation research found high levels of lead in fidget spinners, Target agreed to stop selling them. After the devastating hurricanes, we called on officials to do more to clean up toxic spills and flooded Superfund sites.

But we’re not just responding to these threats; we’re building a better future that works for all Americans.

We want to live in a world where we don’t need to worry about being tricked or trapped by financial companies, where our food systems don’t depend on the widespread use of pesticides in fields or the routine use of antibiotics on farms, and where Americans across the political spectrum can find common ground to make progress for all.

We’re so grateful for all that you’ve done to support our work, and we’re excited to see what we can do next.

Sincerely,

Danny Katz, Director
info@copirg.org

State Of Recycling In Colorado: Needs Improvement

A first-of-its-kind report released by CoPIRG Foundation and Eco-Cycle in November contained sobering numbers about the Centennial State’s recycling rates, which lag more than 20 percent behind the national average.

“We might think of ourselves as a green state, but on average, each Coloradan is putting seven pounds of trash per day in landfills,” said state Director Danny Katz. “Our policies in Colorado are pushing us to do the wrong thing—throw everything in the trash can.”

Our new report, titled “The State Of Recycling In Colorado,” details the policies and practices that lead to low recycling rates, and recommends actions that will help Colorado reach its newly adopted statewide recycling goals.

There’s certainly work to be done. Colorado produces more than 35 million pounds of trash every day—enough trash to fill one garbage truck every minute of every day for a year.

According to our research, one of the biggest barriers to upping the state’s recycling rate is a lack of access to curbside recycling programs. Only one in four Colorado residents automatically receives curbside recycling with trash service—and nearly 40 percent of Colorado counties don’t offer any curbside recycling programs.

The patchwork of recycling program policy across the state becomes clear when comparing recycling rates from different communities. Loveland, for example, has a recycling rate of 61 percent, but Commerce City’s rate is only 16 percent.

Our report found that in Front Range communities like Denver, the problem is exacerbated by a lack of recycling services for apartments and businesses, which produce nearly 60 percent of the waste in Colorado.

“The single biggest thing we can do to stop filling our landfills with recyclable material is to ensure every Coloradan, especially the majority of us who live in cities and towns, has a recycling cart for cans, bottles and paper and a cart for organic compostables,” Katz said. “This would immediately increase our recycling rates.”

Recycling

IN THE NEWS—Our report on state recycling rates received widespread coverage in media across the state.
Toxics

Working To Ban Bee-Killing Pesticides

Bees are dying at unprecedented rates, with real consequences for our food supply, environment and economy. We rely on bees to pollinate $15 billion worth of crops every year—everything from almonds to strawberries to the alfalfa used to feed dairy cows.

That’s why CoPIRG launched our Ban Bee-Killing Pesticides campaign last fall, going door to door and email inbox to inbox to educate and engage our supporters to take action to save bees and our food supply.

With support from our members, we’re calling for Colorado to ban bee-killing pesticides like neonicotinoids, and our national network is doing the same in other states. If enough states take action, we will eliminate the use of more than 40 percent of insecticides used in this country, giving bees a better chance to survive. Furthermore, that kind of collective action will be a strong signal to large chemical companies and to the federal government that the public wants to limit the use of bee-killing pesticides.