

This page highlights efforts of Consumers Union, the policy and action arm of Consumer Reports, to improve the marketplace. Here's some of what we're focused on now.

▶ FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Winners and losers



Sure, giving an award is a thrill, but so is getting one. The Consumer Product Safety Commission has given Consumers Union a Chairman's Commendation Circle Award for our work to prevent deaths and injuries.

We know the work is important to you. Last month's report on arsenic and lead in apple and grape juices drew strong interest. The Food and Drug Administration has set limits on the amount of arsenic and lead allowed in bottled water; to help persuade the FDA to do the same for juice, go to www.ConsumersUnion.org/arsenic.

The CPSC award is a reflection of our dedication to the art and science of prodding the marketplace—and the government—to make safer products and set tighter safety standards.

Really bad ideas

It usually takes intense testing and thorough knowledge of a product to turn up safety issues, but sometimes a product is such a blatantly bad idea that one look tells you there's a problem. Here are three we've highlighted over the years:



1966 With no engine or hood in front, all that came between the driver of a "family bus-wagon" and "all outdoors and its collision hazards" was a glass windshield and some sheet metal.



1975 A toothbrush shaped like a pistol (complete with holster) prompted kids to stick gums in their mouths.



2011 Juicy colors! Fruity varieties! Kids' drink? Nope ... Mistolín household cleaner. And it's child's play to open, with no safety cap.

Jim Guest
JIM GUEST
 President

\$220 million

▶ That's the amount eight pharmaceutical companies paid promotional speakers (overwhelmingly doctors) to talk about their drugs in 2010, according to independent newsroom ProPublica. Beginning in 2013, federal law will require that all companies publicly report such data. Consumer Reports supported the push for full disclosure.

▶ WINNERS CIRCLE

Every driver and passenger in the U.S. is likely to be safer because of Consumers for Auto Reliability and Safety (CARS). The nonprofit auto safety and consumer advocacy organization was one of the five finalists for the Consumer Reports Excellence in Advocacy Award. The group has worked for 30 years to save lives, prevent injuries, and protect consumers from auto-related fraud and abuse.

CARS, led by Rosemary Shahan, helped craft the country's first auto lemon law in California. Now all 50 states have such laws. It recently helped extend protections to military personnel serving or based in California. The group also played a leading role in securing air



LEMON AID Rosemary Shahan (second from left) and CARS helped extend lemon-law coverage to military personnel in California.

bags as standard vehicle equipment and curbs on predatory auto lending.

For details on the award finalists, go to www.ConsumerReports.org/consumeraward.

▶ QUOTABLE

'Clearly, U.S. Bank cannot take the money, contract with our government to provide a service to the taxpayer, violate that agreement, and then say no one on earth can sue them for it.'

—**GEORGIA SUPERIOR COURT JUDGE DENNIS BLACKMON**, denying U.S. Bank's motion to dismiss a lawsuit filed by a mortgage holder who was facing foreclosure. The bank was supposed to use the billions of dollars it received from the government to modify the loans of struggling homeowners. It was being sued after it refused to put on paper why it had turned down a borrower's request for a loan modification.

▶ WEB WATCH

Is this on the record? Find out at www.annualcreditreport.com.

The start of a new year is a good time to check your credit report. Some sites promise you a free report but then try to charge you for services. There's only one authorized source for the free annual credit reports—one from each of the three nationwide consumer credit reporting companies—that are yours by law.

