

# '75 Legislature Will Consider Environment, Drug Prices, Auto Repair, Small Claims

Mass PIRG is sponsoring 12 bills for consideration by the 1975 Massachusetts Legislature. The bills address such issues as nuclear power plant safety, consumer representation at utility hearings, bottle recycling, auto repair shop regulation, drug pricing, small claims regulations and standardized utility rates.

★ **Senate No. 575** (by Ed Burke, D-Framingham and Jack Backman, D-Brookline), modeled after a California initiative proposal, would authorize the legislature to study the health and safety of nuclear power plants and their effects on rational land use planning; and to authorize the state to supervise an orderly planned phase-out of existing plants, including termination of new plant construction, should these be unable to meet basic health and safety standards.

★ **Senate No. 560** (by Ed Burke, D-Framingham), constitutes technical amendments to the Power Plant Siting Council statute which are needed to ensure the Council's consideration of new nuclear power plants presently planned for construction in Massachusetts.

★ **House No. 4111** (by Lois Pines, D-Newton) "The Bottle Bill" would encourage the use of reusable beverage containers, saving consumer dollars and energy and cutting down on unsightly litter. Modeled after the nationally known Oregon Bottle Bill, this measure is strongly supported by a variety of consumer and environmental groups in the Bay State and across the nation.

★ **House No. 3289** (by James Collins, D-Amherst, et al.) "RUCAG" would form a non-profit Residential Utility Consumer Action Group funded by consumers to represent their interests in utility matters at hearings before the Department of Public Utilities and the State Legislature. Consumer interests are not now adequately represented at most such hearings, which could account in part for run-away rate increases. RUCAG would require all utility companies to provide a check-off on their monthly statements, with the checked-off amount to be used for funding consumer advocates in utility negotiations.

★ **House No. 3290** (by Donald Gaudette, D-New Bedford;

Robert Ambler, D-Weymouth) would require licensing of automobile repair shops. The bill is designed to protect consumers from excessive charges and inadequate or incomplete auto repair service.

★ **House No. 2705** (by James Segal, D-Brookline; Barney Frank, D-Boston; Lois Pines, D-Newton; Ronald Pina, D-New Bedford, et al.) would require posting of the hundred most commonly sold prescription drugs in Massachusetts pharmacies. The bill is designed to encourage comparison shopping by providing consumers with retail drug price information.

★ **House No. 3498** (by Robert Ambler, D-Weymouth; Jack Backman, D-Brookline; James Smith, D-Lynn, et al.) "Lifeline" would provide essential electricity at a low set fee. The bill would attack promotional rate structures which encourage energy use and would insure a minimum amount of low-cost power for limited-income consumers.

★ **Senate No. 924** (by John Olver, D-Amherst) would allow a married woman to retain use of her maiden name by filing a simple form.

★ **Senate No. 812** (by William Bulger, D-Boston) would establish Saturday and/or evening sessions for Small Claims Courts.

★ **Senate No. 813** (by William Bulger, D-Boston) would raise the initial amount of debt or damages claimed in Small Claims Court actions from \$400 or less to \$750 or less.

★ **House No. 3573** (by John Businger, D-Brookline) is a perfecting amendment to the Freedom of Information Act. It would eliminate excessive fees for public records such as birth, death and marriage certificates, and would allow citizens to appeal the denial of a public record by a city or town official.

★ **Senate No. 1085** (by Chester Atkins, D-Acton) would require legislative approval prior to construction of fission-powered nuclear plants. The legislature would be entitled to consider health, safety and economic factors of nuclear power in deciding whether to grant the plant permit.

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Frances B. King, Editor  
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