

Can Democracy Survive The Morbidly Rich?



*Thom Hartmann - Photo:
en.wikipedia.org*

02-02-2024 ~ So, Donald Trump won Iowa. A crazed billionaire who wants to “suspend the Constitution” and claims the right to murder his political enemies. It doesn’t have to be this way.

Imagine.

Fox “News” shuts down (or just decides to only tell the truth), and most of the steam goes out of the rightwing populist MAGA movement which its billionaire owners helped create in the U.S. Insurrectionist members of Congress find themselves in [jail facing sedition](#) charges, as the previous leader of the country is under [criminal investigation](#) for taking help from Putin’s Russia. The government begins the process of [decriminalizing abortion](#) nationwide. The Supreme Court’s *Citizens United* decision is overturned and, without the flow of billionaire money directing their votes, Congress begins to actually pass laws that [reflect the desires](#) of the majority of the people.

Unless you read international newspapers like *The Financial Times*, odds are you have no idea that same scenario is now playing out in Poland which, for the previous eight years, had been suffering under a Trump-like administration.

Last summer, progressive Polish politician Donald Tusk promised he was going to

clean up that country with an [“iron broom.”](#) Few took his promise seriously, but after being sworn into office last month, he’s actually doing it. As Maciej Kisilowski [writes for *The Financial Times*](#), just a few days after Tusk became prime minister:

“... Poland’s politicized public television station, notorious for its xenophobic, homophobic and racist messages, abruptly went dark. Tusk’s culture ministry summarily dismissed the station’s board and stopped broadcasts to prevent the outgoing leadership from inflaming tensions by airing live the takeover of the group’s headquarters.”

Last week two of the top rightwing politicians in Poland were arrested for abuse of power during the previous regime, while only a few hundred people showed up to protest the end of rightwing programming on the nation’s main television network.

Last Thursday there was a march to protest the new progressive prime minister, but the reaction was both tepid and nonviolent. As Kisilowski writes for *The Financial Times*:

“These decisive, if heavy-handed, actions come at a time when democrats globally are searching for strategies to deal with populists. In the U.S., for example, there is intense debate about whether the protracted legal cases against Donald Trump are serving to boost his campaign to return to the White House. Perhaps Tusk’s approach offers hope.”

Dislodging the death grip the GOP has on American politics will be more difficult than in Poland, in large part because five corrupt Republicans on the U.S. Supreme Court legalized political bribery with their *Citizens United* decision.

The [2020 election](#) cost over \$14 billion. The [2016 election](#) was only \$6.5 billion. But in 2008, two years before *Citizens United*, it hadn’t even hit \$1 billion: total spending with a mere [\\$717 million](#). As the Executive Director of the money tracking [opensecrets.org](#), [Sheila Krumholz](#), said:

“Total outside spending is surprisingly high for this point in the cycle—we’re already at nearly \$230 million. That’s more than twice the previous record through this point in the cycle, which was back in 2016. But it’s more than five times as much as was spent by this point in the last presidential cycle in 2020.”

Rightwing fascist-adjacent billionaires have used that open door to severely corrupt our political system, leading to massive gridlock when it comes to anything average people want.

Meanwhile, billionaires got tax cuts and deregulation making them vastly richer at the same time the companies that made them rich refuse to even commit to paying their workers a living wage ([fewer than one percent](#) of the world's top companies have made such a commitment).

As a result, Princeton scholars Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page [famously found](#) that the odds of average Americans' political desires being translated into policy are about the same as "random noise."

On the other hand, the new American system created by Republicans on our Supreme Court works quite well for the morbidly rich. The people Gilens and Page refer to as the "economic elites" frequently get everything they want from the political class.

They wrote that we still have the "features" of democracy, like elections, but ended their paper with [this](#) cautionary note:

"[W]e believe that if policymaking is dominated by powerful business organizations and a small number of affluent Americans, then America's claims to being a democratic society are seriously threatened."

So, here we are.

If, in a zoo somewhere, a single chimpanzee had risen up and taken all the food from all the other chimpanzees and was hoarding it without being challenged, scientists from all over the world would be trying to figure out what was wrong with that chimpanzee and why the others tolerated his theft.

As Oxfam International pointed out in a report timed to correspond with the kickoff of the billionaire love-fest [at Davos](#) this week, the five richest men in the world—four of them Americans—saw their net worth [more than double](#) over the past three years from \$405 billion to \$869 billion.

Since those five corrupt Republicans on the Court also ruled in *Citizens United* that corporations are "persons" with nearly-full access to the Bill of Rights—including the right to use money to pay off politicians (the Republicans on

the Court call it First Amendment-protected “free speech”)—the corporations that are producing these billionaires are also gouging American consumers as hard and fast as they can.

As Oxfam [noted](#) (keep in mind, “profit” means, essentially, “the money that’s left over after all of our business expenses, including payroll, that we, the owners, get to split up and keep for ourselves”):

“Mirroring the fortunes of the super-rich, large firms are set to smash their annual profit records in 2023. 148 of the world’s biggest corporations together raked in \$1.8 trillion in total net profits in the year to June 2023, a 52 percent jump compared to average net profits in 2018-2021. Their windfall profits surged to nearly \$700 billion.”

That money isn’t going to workers, though, who’ve seen their real, inflation-adjusted wages fall worldwide in the same period. Instead:

“The report finds that for every \$100 of profit made by 96 major corporations between July 2022 and June 2023, \$82 was paid out to rich shareholders. ... It would take 1,200 years for a woman working in the health and social sector to earn what the average CEO in the biggest 100 Fortune companies earns in a year.”

Thanks to Clarence Thomas’ tie-breaking vote in *Citizens United*, Americas are not getting what they want. Which is another way of saying the morbidly rich and the judges and politicians they’ve bought are actively breaking our democratic republic.

On the eve of the 2016 election of Donald Trump, for example, the *Progressive Change Institute* did a nationwide survey of likely voters. The [results were stark](#):

- 84 percent want the government to negotiate drug prices.
- 79 percent support expanding Social Security (which Haley and DeSantis both just last week promised to cut).
- 78 percent want “fair trade” that ends shipping our jobs overseas.
- 77 percent want to tax corporations that have moved jobs overseas.
- 77 percent want universal free pre-kindergarten.
- 74 percent want all Americans to be able to buy into Medicare-for-All.
- 71 percent support a massive infrastructure spending program aimed at

rebuilding our broken roads and bridges and putting people back to work.

- 70 percent want free college at all public universities.
- 68 percent want a guaranteed minimum income.
- 67 percent want the government to be the employer of last resort to end unemployment (like FDR did).
- 66 percent want the morbidly rich to pay at least a 50 percent income tax (currently the average American billionaire [pays around 3 percent](#)).
- 65 percent want the big banks broken up and a return to local banking.
- 64 percent want net neutrality so your billion-dollar corporate internet and email providers can't monitor everything you do online and sell that information.
- 63 percent want public financing of elections to get billionaire money out of them.
- 60 percent want the Post Office to offer inexpensive public banking.

President Biden and Democrats in Congress got some of the infrastructure work done and tried to end much of America's nearly \$2 trillion in student debt (until they were blocked by Republican lawsuits and six Republicans on the Supreme Court), and a small bit of the "Green New Deal" incorporated into the Inflation Reduction Act, but otherwise there's a lot that Americans want and deserve that they're not getting.

Why? Because the morbidly rich control much of our political process right now, and most of our media.

As former Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis famously said:

"We must make our choice. We may have democracy, or we may have wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, but we cannot have both."

This year's election will not only decide whether we're going to let Trump or a similar Republican end American democracy; it will also, if enough of us show up, determine if *Citizens United* can be legislatively overturned and we can purge our political system of the cancer of big money.

Democrats almost did it in 2022: the *For the People Act* would have reversed significant parts of *Citizens United* and provided for public funding of and more transparency around elections. It passed the House and got enough votes to pass the Senate under the Constitution.

Even the Republican filibuster could have been overcome if we hadn't been betrayed by Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema in the Senate. Make sure everybody you know is registered to vote. The stakes have never been higher.

By Thom Hartmann

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2024 Will See Wave Of Minimum Wage Hikes — But The Impacts Won't Be Felt Evenly



Jeannette Wicks - Photo: Political Economy Research Institute

02-02-2024 ~*Ten million US workers will see wage increases this year, but inflation has eroded our tools for reducing inequality.*

On January 1, 2024, the minimum wage increased from coast to coast. Indeed, 22 states and more than 40 cities and counties experienced wage increases in 2024 — most of them approaching \$15. More states will follow with minimum wage increases later in the year. Undoubtedly, this is mainly the result of underpaid workers organizing and fighting for a decent living wage over the past decade, but is a minimum wage enough? Moreover, where are the increases in minimum wage taking place?

A look at [the map](#) shows that the South still trails behind. Could this be due to racism in the labor market? In the exclusive interview with *Truthout* that follows, progressive economist Jeannette Wicks-Lim shares her research findings and insights on the politics and economics of increasing minimum wages. Wicks-Lim is a research professor at the Political Economy Research Institute (PERI) at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and specializes in labor economics with an emphasis on the low-wage labor market.

C. J. Polychroniou: The federal minimum wage is still \$7.25, but higher minimum wages went into effect in early January in 22 states, while three more (Florida, Nevada and Oregon) will increase their minimum wages later in 2024. How many and what sort of workers are going to be affected by these wage increases, and how significant are these minimum wage hikes in improving the overall standard of living for low-wage workers?

Jeannette Wicks-Lim: First, to your question about how many and what sort of workers will benefit from these minimum wage increases: An excellent resource for understanding the basic facts of who will benefit from these minimum wage increases is [the Economic Policy Institute](#).

There are two basic types of raises that result from these increases — mandated and ripple-effect raises. Mandated raises are the raises that get workers up to the new, higher minimum wage level. Ripple-effect raises are raises that employers may choose to give workers who are earning a little more than the minimum wage — often these are workers with more experience than the entry-level workers who are more likely to earn minimum wage rates. Employers may do this so that the workers with more experience continue to earn more than entry-level workers after the minimum wage goes up. Overall, about 10 million workers — including

both types of raises — will receive wage increases. This represents about 15 percent of the workforces in the states implementing minimum wage hikes. So, the impact — in terms of the share of affected workers — is substantial.

Due primarily to occupational segregation, women are over-represented in low-paying jobs, so they tend to receive a disproportionate share of the raises. Low-wage jobs are particularly concentrated in food services, for example, particularly fast-food restaurants. Workers in other service industries, such as home care aides and child care workers, are well represented among those whose wages rise with minimum wage hikes.

Black, Indigenous, and other workers of color also tend to be overrepresented among the workers who receive raises from minimum wage hikes when looking within the states adopting minimum wage hikes. However, it's important to note that a majority of Black Americans do not reside in the states raising their minimum wage so that, overall, such workers are underrepresented among pool of beneficiaries from minimum wage hikes. This reflects the fact that southern states, and especially those that formerly made up the Confederate states, tend to have weak labor standards. This is clearly visible when you look at a map of where the minimum wage hikes are happening. The history of racism in the U.S. — especially in how the labor market operates — shows up clearly here.

Next, to your question about how the minimum wage raises affect the living standard of low-wage workers: I know from the multiple studies my colleagues at [PERI](#) and I have done in the past that the earnings of minimum wage workers typically contribute 40 percent of their household's income so that a meaningful raise to these workers pay rates have a meaningful impact on their household incomes. These workers are typically from lower- to middle-income households.

Now, some of the minimum wage hikes that will pass are quite small — they only account for the increase in inflation rather than increasing the wage floor in inflation-adjusted terms. So, it'll be workers in those states that lift the wage floor in real, inflation-adjusted terms, that can expect meaningful boosts to their living standards. Roughly speaking, about half the states raising their minimum wages are adopting increases in the range of 3 percent — these reflect, generally speaking, inflation-related adjustments. Another quarter of these states have minimum wage hikes in the range of 7 percent, and the remaining quarter are raising their minimum wage floors in excess of 10 percent.

In the states with minimum wage hikes of at least 10 percent, my back-of-the-envelope calculations suggest that the average worker who receives a raise will be able to boost their household's income by about 4 percent (10 percent raise x 40 percent contribution to household income). This is a meaningful increase. For a low-income household with three people (say, an income of \$35,000), that translates to an annual increase of nearly \$1,400. At the same time, given the rate of inflation in the last few years, even the smaller inflation-adjustment raises serve as important safeguards to at least maintaining workers' living standards.

Why is it that half of the country is raising the minimum wage while the other half is not? In this context, can you talk about the politics behind minimum wage increases? For instance, there have been strong public campaigns to raise wages and end subminimum wages since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I'm not a political scientist, so my views on this are more impressionistic than based on any research I've done. What seems to be an important determinant of whether a minimum wage hike passes or not is how directly voters can weigh in on the question.

What I've observed is that minimum wage hikes are typically extremely popular at the ballot box. When voters get a chance to directly weigh in on whether their state should strengthen this labor standard, they typically vote in favor in large numbers. It seems that voters see minimum wage hikes as reasonable, fair and potentially beneficial to themselves and the economy. This is a popular issue even across the two major political parties. Take as an example, Florida, in which 71 percent of voters voted in favor of establishing that state's minimum in 2004. In that same year, the majority of these Florida voters voted for Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush.

As we move further away from voters having a direct say, such as minimum wage hikes proposed by state legislators, there seem to be more mixed results and partisan politics appear to play a stronger role. Getting a minimum wage hike through a state legislature dominated by the Republican Party is, it seems, nearly impossible. Again, this isn't my area of research, but what this suggests to me is that business interests are more successful in lobbying Republican-leaning legislators than Republican-leaning voters. That, in turn, suggests that Republican-leaning legislators benefit more from these business interests than Republican-leaning voters. Still, states have increasingly taken up the role of

strengthening this wage floor as the federal rate has stagnated. In 1980, for example, only two states operated with a state minimum wage higher than the federal rate — Connecticut and Alaska. Now, as you note, about half the states in the country are increasing their minimum wage rates while the federal rate remains unchanged. I would bet that states that have a higher state minimum wage than the federal level *and* that typically have Republican-leaning state legislatures got their minimum wage rate through a ballot initiative.

At the federal level, there is no option to put this question directly to the voters. States that operate with the federal rate have seen the long stretches of time with no minimum wage hike — from 1982 to 1989 (eight years), and again from 1998 to 2006 (nine years), and now from 2010 to today (at least 14 years). The last federal increase — in 2009 — as the second step in a two-part increase was signed into law by a Republican president and a Democratic-led U.S. Congress. Since then, none have passed.

Do increases in the minimum wage affect the labor market?

I'll focus on one of the important ways that the minimum wage impacts the labor market: The minimum wage has played an important role, at least historically, in reducing wage inequality. Prior to 1980, the minimum wage rose roughly in step with [worker productivity](#) so that the lowest wages increased in a meaningful way over time. And, because of ripple effect raises, these increases would basically pull up the bottom of the wage distribution closer to the middle. One important feature of the minimum wage to notice is that while these ripple-effect raises extend the benefits of minimum wage hikes to workers earning above the minimum wage, this pool of beneficiaries is really limited to workers at the low end of the wage distribution. High-wage workers, on the other hand, do not get raises from changes to the minimum wage. As a result, minimum wage-induced raises have the effect of compressing the wage distribution — i.e. reducing overall wage inequality. I say historically, because this role has been weakened in recent decades, especially in the states that only operate with the federal minimum, as the federal minimum wage has lost a significant amount of its inflation-adjusted value.

Another major way that the minimum wage, again historically, reduced wage inequality occurred when the Fair Labor Standards Act strengthened the labor standard by expanding which workers would be protected. Prior to 1966, the

standard did not apply to a large segment of the low-wage workforce, excluding occupations in which Black workers were overrepresented due to racial discrimination. These occupations included farming and various service sector jobs. In their [2021 study](#), economists Ellora Derenoncourt and Claire Montialoux found that when these types of occupations became newly protected in 1966, the federal minimum wage reduced the earnings gap between Black and white workers by roughly one-fifth.

The minimum wage is regarded by many economists as an important tool of public policy for combating poverty and inequality. Do minimum wages deliver what they promise?

I've already touched on the topic of how the minimum wage impacts inequality so let me focus here on the question of poverty. I think of the minimum wage as being primarily a policy tool that helps low-income to middle-income households. This is because the minimum wage has no statistically discernible impact on employment (positive *or* negative) and so it is a policy tool that benefits employed workers, most directly. Those who are unemployed, or not in the labor force can only benefit indirectly from minimum wage hikes, e.g. through the earnings of other household members or by maintaining the labor standards of existing jobs so that when such individuals become employed, they benefit from the minimum wage floor. Other policies need to supplement robust minimum wages to effectively tackle poverty. The other policies that I think of include economic policies to move the U.S. economy to full employment, policies that subsidize traditionally unpaid work (e.g. child care and elder care), and policies that reduce wealth inequality so that more households are able to weather financial shocks, such as medical emergencies and spells of unemployment.

This interview has been lightly edited for clarity and length.

Source: <https://truthout.org/>

C.J. Polychroniou is a political scientist/political economist, author, and journalist who has taught and worked in numerous universities and research centers in Europe and the United States. Currently, his main research interests are in U.S. politics and the political economy of the United States, European economic integration, globalization, climate change and environmental economics, and the deconstruction of neoliberalism's politico-economic project. He is a regular contributor to *Truthout* as well as a member of *Truthout's* Public Intellectual

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How Media Companies Can Meet Their Climate Commitments - And How Readers Can Help



*Laura Lee Cascada -Photo:
lauraleecascada.com*

02-01-2024 ~ *A few simple strategies for recipe curation can help newsgroups achieve their own climate goals.*

The global shift toward plant-forward diets, particularly in wealthy countries, is consistently [recognized](#) as one of the most effective ways to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions.

Given the significant influence media wields in shaping cultural norms, news outlets have a unique opportunity to promote plant-based eating, mainly through the recipes they offer their audiences. Through several simple behavioral nudges, news outlets can guide their readers toward healthier, climate-friendly eating—while aligning their recipe sections with their purported values around responsible climate reporting.

Environmental and Public Health Dangers of Factory Farming

Industrial animal agriculture is an enormous driver of planetary harm. According to a June 2018 article published in the journal [Science](#), meat, aquaculture, dairy, and eggs contribute about 56 to 58 percent of food’s greenhouse gas emissions, yet they only provide 18 percent of our calories. Meat and dairy production is also a [leading cause](#) of biodiversity loss, freshwater use, chemical pollution, and resource shortages.

While [up to 8,000](#) gallons of water are needed to produce just a pound of beef, a pound of tofu only requires about 300 gallons, according to an article in UCLA Sustainability. “[W]ithout meat and dairy consumption, global farmland use could be reduced by more than 75 percent—an area equivalent to the U.S., China, European Union, and Australia combined—and still feed the world,” [states](#) an article in the Guardian.

Because of the crowded, filthy conditions inherent to factory farms, animal agriculture further contributes to a range of public health risks of particular concern in the post-pandemic world. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, poultry and egg production is [associated](#) with foodborne pathogens such as salmonella and campylobacter, and these farms are [incubators](#) of many potentially dangerous influenza viruses.

Given these dangers, an article in the American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine [points out](#) that besides doing away with the cruel confinement practices associated with animal agriculture, there is a need “to research, develop, and invest in innovative plant-based and cultivated meat technologies to move away from raising billions of feathered and curly-tailed test tubes for viruses with

pandemic potential to mutate within.”

Farmed animals are also the [largest source](#) of antibiotic usage in the U.S. at about [73 percent](#)—based on figures provided by the Natural Resources Defense Council in December 2022—leading to the rise of antibiotic-resistant superbugs. The nonprofit Farm Forward revealed in August 2022 that even meat labeled as antibiotic-free [may still contain](#) these drugs.

Mainstream Media’s Role in Creating a Climate-Friendly Food System

Many large news organizations have made public their own internal goals of helping the climate. The New York Times, for example, [says](#) that the newspaper “recognize[s] the effects of climate change, and we are taking action to reduce our own impact. We are committed to reducing our carbon footprint and identifying opportunities to improve the sustainability of our business operations.”

In 2021, the Times debuted “[The Veggie](#)” newsletter and dedicated more space in their digital cooking section for vegetarian and vegan recipes, reviews, and tips. “The call for vegan and vegetarian foods is growing louder every day, and as the volume increases, the food world is responding,” [wrote](#) Maxwell Rabb in an article on the Beet about the Times initiative.

Internally and externally, media groups play an outsized role in shaping both public sentiment and cultural norms. Fact-based coverage of climate change has [gradually improved](#) in recent years, with many outlets now espousing a commitment to scientifically reporting on the issue. For example, several top publications now have climate-dedicated verticals, while the Guardian [introduced](#) new guidelines in 2019 for language and images used in climate stories to reflect the issue’s urgency. But for most news outlets, a glaring blind spot around climate remains—in their food sections.

A [2023 Faunalytics and Sentient Media](#) report on the number of times animal agriculture was mentioned by climate media found that only 7 percent of the 1,000 climate articles surveyed mentioned animal agriculture. Six times as many articles mentioned transportation.

Given that animal agriculture’s [emissions rival](#) those of the entire transportation sector, the media’s heavy emphasis on electric vehicles and petrol has obscured our food system’s outsized role in the climate crisis.

Considering the lack of journalistic attention given to industrial animal agriculture, it is unsurprising that most news outlets have yet to align their recipe sections with their commitment to responsible climate coverage. Yet these publications have a unique opportunity—and responsibility—to profoundly shape cultural norms by promoting climate-friendly, plant-based foods.

One of the few recipe hubs bold enough to make the link explicit is Condé Nast-owned Epicurious, which in 2021 “left beef behind.” Citing ruminants’ inefficiency and rising beef consumption in the U.S., [Epicurious’s new policy](#) was keenly introduced at rollout as “not anti-beef but rather pro-planet.” Beef does not feature in any Epicurious-originating recipes, articles, or newsletters after April 2021—though, counterproductively, the site still cross-posts beefy recipes from sister brand Bon Appetit.

Besides Epicurious, most recipe sites have been silent on this topic.

Investigating Mainstream Media’s Recipe Curation

I work at the [Better Food Foundation](#) (BFF), serving as the senior director of campaigns. We wanted to determine whether mainstream media outlets had begun aligning their recipe curation with the climate-conscious values they espouse. So, with support from [Sentient Media](#), we worked with a data scientist to [analyze the recipe sections](#) of the top four UK-based—BBC, the Guardian, the Independent, and ITV—and top four U.S.-based—Associated Press, New York Times, Washington Post, and Yahoo News—media outlets with a track record for responsible climate reporting (reporting that adheres to the scientific consensus) in 2023.

Among these eight outlets, we found that five predominantly feature meat-based recipes. Only the Washington Post, the Guardian, and Yahoo News had less than half of their recipes categorized as “omnivorous.”

Notably, the Washington Post and the Guardian both [expressed](#) their intent to curate climate-friendly food content, indicating some level of awareness about their role in addressing the climate-diet link not only through reporting but also through modeling sustainable behavior.

We offered every outlet a chance to respond to our findings, and one significant reply came from Joe Yonan of the Washington Post, who [explained](#), “We are always looking for ways to help our readers lead better lives, according to their own

definition, and recipes play a large role in that... [M]ore and more readers are looking for help making climate-friendly decisions about all aspects of their lives, food included, and we want to respond to that.”

Looking Ahead

So, where do we go from here? For most mainstream news outlets, there is an untapped opportunity to curate more plant-forward recipe sections. Our [report](#) about the findings mentioned above and an [accompanying webinar](#) offer five scientifically proven strategies that use behavioral “nudges” to guide readers toward more climate-friendly meals.

These tips, part of a concept we call [DefaultVeg](#), make plant-based foods the primary or default option without taking away the choice to select meat or dairy. A [2022 study](#) conducted by Food for Climate League in collaboration with BFF, Greener by Default, and researchers at Boston College on three Sodexo campuses found that when implemented consistently, this strategy increased the take rate of plant-based meals from 30.8 percent to 81.5 percent—significantly cutting food’s environmental footprint.

Suggestions to News Organizations

We suggest the following [changes](#) in the recipe sections of news outlets:

Maintain a 2-to-1 ratio of plant-based to animal-based recipes. For every omnivorous entree, there should be two vegan recipes, or at the very least, one vegetarian and one vegan recipe.

Present plant-based options first, by default. Feature climate-friendly options prominently within search results and recipe collections by listing them first.

Designate editors’ picks or seasonal recommendations as plant-based by default. When creating features like a summer BBQ showcase or Thanksgiving dishes emphasize plant-based grilling options or vegan dishes like roasted squash and vegan mashed potatoes.

Substitute animal-based ingredients with plant-based alternatives in popular recipes. Many recipes can easily become vegan by swapping out specific ingredients without sacrificing the flavor or quality of the dish. For instance, use vegan mayo instead of egg-based mayo in potato salad—taste testers won’t notice the difference.

Include a climate score for each recipe based on ingredient emissions intensity. Present climate-friendly options as a priority, following a successful approach demonstrated in online simulations and randomized clinical trials.

Shifting toward plant-based eating is among the most [powerful changes](#) we as individuals can make to benefit the planet. Media, which has a major impact on popular culture and behavior, can help facilitate this shift on an enormous scale by presenting plant-based foods as the norm rather than the exception. Making the simple changes mentioned above to their recipe sections will also help media outlets better adhere to their own stated climate reporting values—and maintain their status as trusted news sources with an audience that’s [increasingly hungry](#) for climate-friendly food.

And readers have a role to play, too. They can help by writing letters to editors of newspapers and magazines asking them to make their recipe sections more climate-friendly and increase their coverage of plant-based eating.

By Laura Lee Cascada

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