



You get what you organize for—and this past summer, PIRG canvassers around the country got out in the field to engage thousands of members like you in our campaign to move Whole Foods beyond plastic. Credit: Staff

We're calling on Whole Foods to ditch single-use plastic packaging

By Alex Truelove, director of PIRG's Zero Waste Campaigns

Whole Foods can set a bold example and reduce harmful plastic waste by eliminating single-use plastic packaging from its stores.

Without decisive action, especially from major corporations such as Whole Foods, the amount of plastic waste polluting our communities and environment will only continue to grow.

Right now, our country throws out enough plastic every day to fill 1.5 football stadiums. Worldwide, plastic waste outweighs all land and marine animals combined.

Currently, Whole Foods is not living up to its reputation as a sustainable, environmentally conscious company—due in large part to its continued use of wasteful, single-use plastic pack-

aging. So WashPIRG and our national network are mobilizing thousands of citizen advocates to call on Whole Foods to move beyond plastic and help turn the tide on our waste crisis.

At WashPIRG, we know that when everyday people organize around commonsense solutions to our shared problems, we can make real change. That's why, this past summer, our national network knocked on more than 24,000 doors across the country, talking to people like you about slashing plastic waste.

Members like yourself had already helped fuel a digital organizing push that saw 59,000 people, including more than 40 state lawmakers, add their voice to a petition urging Whole Foods to take bold action on plastic. And now your support is helping us take the campaign to the next level.

GO PAPERLESS!

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Whole Foods can do better

Last year, a report gave Whole Foods an “F” on reducing plastic waste. Why? The company has failed to embrace reusable packaging and recycled content, and it hasn’t been transparent about the packaging materials



In our United States Against Plastic rally last April, PIRG and Environment America went on a virtual road trip to discuss policies to combat the plastic pollution crisis.

it uses or taken responsibility for the plastic waste its packaging becomes. That puts Whole Foods behind even Walmart and Kroger when it comes to leadership on reducing plastic pollution.

Such a disappointing grade is certainly surprising for Whole Foods. At one point, the grocer was a prominent leader on cutting out unnecessary plastic, from eliminating plastic bags at checkout in 2008 to removing plastic straws from its stores in 2019.

The good news: Whole Foods can make a huge impact on this issue if it acts right now and sets an example on plastic waste reduction that others in the industry can follow.

We need all hands on deck to tackle plastic pollution

There’s no denying our plastic waste crisis is a daunting one. But as bad as plastic pollution has gotten, there remain concrete, achievable solutions we can enact to move our country beyond plastic and toward zero waste.

PIRG knows what it takes to get decision-makers to act on plastic pollution, and in cities and states across the country, our national network has won efforts to reduce waste, including pro-recycling laws and bans on some of the worst single-use items such as plastic bags and polystyrene foam containers.

Now, we’re turning our focus to include the corporations that produce and use all this plastic in the first place—and companies big and small are already starting to move in the right direction. Regional grocer Giant Eagle has committed to eliminating single-use plastics by 2025; Target has announced a goal to reduce its use of virgin plastic 20 percent by 2025 across its own brand frequency products; and the Coca-Cola Company (the world’s top plastic polluter according to a global audit by the nonprofit Break Free From Plastic) has pledged to use bottles made with 100 percent recycled plastic for certain brands in some states.

Of course, none of these commitments are “silver bullets” to our plastic waste crisis. They’re good starts, but if we hope to pass on litter-free communities and a healthier planet to future generations, we need to go bigger.

That’s where Whole Foods comes in. A nationwide commitment to get single-use plastic packaging off its shelves would be a landmark step toward moving our country beyond plastic. ■

NEWS BRIEFS

RIGHT TO REPAIR

President Biden signs executive order supporting right to repair

The right to repair our stuff—without having to pay an arm and a leg to the manufacturer—used to be the status quo. Now, thanks to a presidential executive order, right to repair is on its way back.

President Joe Biden’s July 9 executive order called on the Federal Trade Commission to limit software locks on farm equipment and compelled the agency to prohibit “anti-competitive restrictions on using independent repair shops or DIY repairs of your own devices and equipment.”

In the span of a few years, PIRG, the independent repair hub Repair.org, and the online repair community iFixit have helped propel right to repair from online forums and local fix-it-yourself clinics to state legislatures—and now even the White House.

WashPIRG’s Mission

When consumers are cheated or the voices of ordinary citizens are drowned out by special interest lobbyists, WashPIRG speaks up and takes action. We uncover threats to public health and well-being and fight to end them, using the time-tested tools of investigative research, media exposés, grassroots organizing, advocacy and litigation. WashPIRG’s mission is to deliver persistent, results-oriented public interest activism that protects consumers, encourages a fair, sustainable economy, and fosters responsive, democratic government.

“This is great news for everyone concerned with repair monopolies. It shows that the Right to Repair campaign is moving forward and winning new support,” said Nathan Proctor, PIRG’s Right to Repair senior campaign director. “Already, the majority of American people agree with us. Now, it appears, the president does as well.” ■

PUBLIC HEALTH

Report: Wendy’s commits to reducing antibiotics in its supply chain, but industry-wide action still needed

One of the most effective ways we can tackle the growing threat of antibiotic-resistant infections—and even help prevent the next pandemic—is to stop the overuse of antibiotics on factory farms.

That’s why we applauded Wendy’s, one of the largest beef buyers in the country, for its commitment to end all routine use of medically important antibiotics in its beef supplies by the end of 2030.

Still, though, a report from our national research partners at U.S. PIRG Education Fund, titled “Chain Reaction VI,” shows the continued need for an industry-wide shift in how our favorite restaurants source their meat. Twelve of the 20 chains scored received an “F” for their lack of policies to curb the overuse of antibiotics in their supply chains.

“Commitments from major industry players are a good start, but we can’t stop there, given the threat antibiotic resistance poses right now,” said Matt Wellington, director of PIRG’s public health campaigns. “Efforts to protect our lifesaving medicines have resulted in a huge reduction in their use on chickens. And when Wendy’s and McDonald’s follow through on their commitments, it could do the same thing for beef.” ■

TRANSFORM TRANSPORTATION

U.S. House passes record investments in transportation, clean water

Who wouldn’t want to ensure their children and grandchildren can enjoy clean air, clean water, and safe and efficient transportation?



Irina Logvin Photography

On July 1, the U.S House of Representatives approved the INVEST in America Act, including \$547 billion for public transit, walking and biking infrastructure, and wildlife crossings; \$40 billion for clean water infrastructure; and \$45 billion to replace lead pipes. The bill responds to many of the concerns raised in U.S. PIRG Education Fund’s November 2020 report, “Blueprint for America.”

“No one wants dirty air, polluted water or unsafe roads,” said PIRG President Faye Park. “Adopting commonsense solutions to these problems, such as expanding public transit and replacing dangerous lead water service lines, is in the interest of all Americans.”

“This bill shows a healthier, safer future is possible, and we look forward to continuing to work with Congress as it adopts these crucial investments in its infrastructure package.” ■

Jenn Engstrom, state director with our partner group CALPIRG, held a press conference to discuss the “Chain Reaction VI” report and congratulate Wendy’s on its commitment to stop the use of medically important antibiotics in its beef supply chain.



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TOP STORY:

We're calling on Whole Foods to ditch single-use plastic packaging

WashPIRG and our national network are organizing citizen advocates like you to convince Whole Foods to move beyond wasteful single-use plastic. Your support makes this work possible.

ZERO OUT TOXICS

Bayer to remove toxic glyphosate from Roundup

As Bayer plans to reformulate its weed killer Roundup, the company has a chance to finally ensure its product is safe—but only if it doesn't just replace one toxic chemical with another.

After a federal judge rejected a proposal in May to resolve future claims that Roundup causes cancer, Bayer has now announced it will remove the weed killer's main active ingredient, glyphosate, which has been recognized as a probable human carcinogen since 2015.

Thousands of people have made legal claims that using Roundup caused their non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. And years of organizing, activism and public pressure, fueled by members like you, has helped make this progress possible.



Mike Mozart via Flickr, CC BY 2.0

Roundup, and generic versions of it, is the most widely used herbicide in the U.S.—despite being linked to cancer.

"A product we use for lawn care shouldn't put us at risk of developing cancer," said Danielle Melgar, advocate for PIRG's toxics campaigns. "We're calling on Bayer to reformulate its product the right way with chemicals that don't pose risks to human health." ■

THANKS TO YOU



Dear WashPIRG member,
Your support is what allows WashPIRG and our national network to build momentum for policies and solutions that will move our country beyond plastic, ensure products are toxic-free, secure Americans' right to repair, and much more. Thank you for standing with us.

Faye Park
President, National Office
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