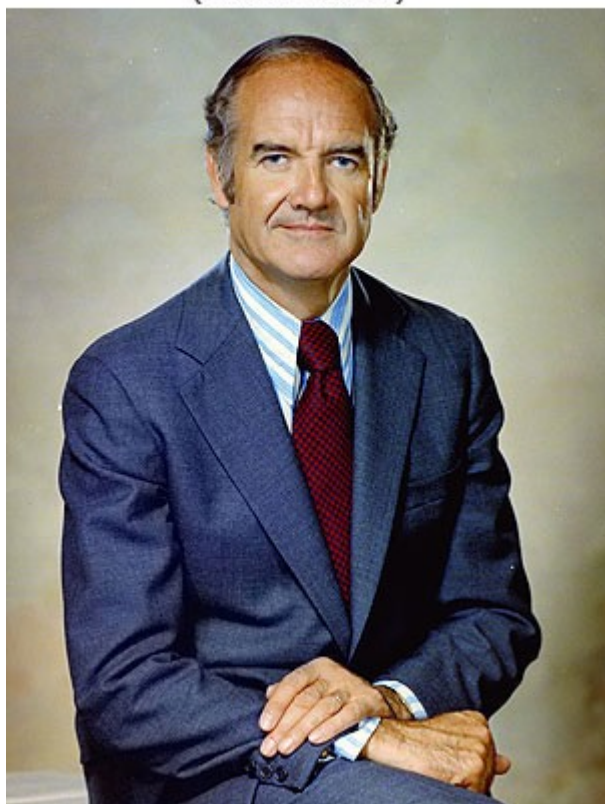


THE MCDUGALL NEWSLETTER | *It's the food.*

Senator George McGovern (1922 to 2012)



George McGovern's Legacy: The Dietary Goals for the United States

George McGovern, former Democratic Senator from South Dakota, died October 21, 2012 at age 90. A true pioneer, ahead of his time, he fought for hardworking people and was the driving force behind the [1977 Dietary Goals for the United States](#), also known as the "McGovern Report." These new guidelines on eating were expected to have similar health-changing effects as the 1964 Surgeon General's Report on Smoking. The prevalence of smoking cigarettes has been reduced from 50 percent of the adult population in the seventies to [fewer than 20 percent](#) today.

At the time the McGovern Report was published, animal fat intake from red meat, poultry, and dairy foods was at an all time high and so was the death rate from heart disease and strokes. The McGovern Report found that, "...there is a great deal of evidence and it continues to accumulate, which strongly implicates and, in some instances, proves that the major causes of death and disability in the United States are related to the diet we eat. I [Dr. Hegsted of Harvard School of Public Health] include coronary artery disease, which accounts for nearly half the deaths in the United States, several of the most important forms of cancer, hypertension, diabetes and obesity as well as other chronic diseases."

According to the McGovern Report, "The question to be asked, therefore, is not why should we change our diet, but why not? What are the risks associated with eating less meat, less fat, less saturated fat, less cholesterol, less sugar, less salt, and more fruits, vegetables, unsaturated fat, and cereal

products—especially whole grain cereals? There are none that can be identified and important benefits can be expected." The dietary goals set forth a plan that would increase the [intake of starches](#) (whole grains, legumes, and root vegetables), green and

McDougall's Connection with the McGovern Report

When the bipartisan Senate Select Committee on Human and Nutrition Needs published the McGovern Report in 1977, I (John McDougall, MD) was 30 years old and studying to become an internist at the University of Hawaii. Based on my observations as a sugar plantation doctor on the Big Island of Hawaii between 1973 and 1976, I had already discovered the importance of diet. My first-generation patients (the Filipinos, Japanese, Chinese, and Koreans) were trim and healthy as a result of following a diet based on rice and vegetables with no dairy products and very small amounts of meat. My conclusions were reinforced when I witnessed my second-, third-, and fourth-generation patients abandon their parents' traditional, healthy, starch-based diets for meat, dairy and other junk, which led them to become fat and sick.

In 1976, I left the sugar plantation and returned to the University of Hawaii for more education. One great fortune was my discovery of the Hawaii State Medical Library, filled with thousands of scientific reports confirming my observations from the sugar plantation. The publication of the McGovern Report in 1977 was "icing on the cake." The truth was out, and I believed

yellow non-starchy vegetables, and fruits. Saturated fats (meat, milk, butter, and cheese), salt, and simple sugars would be reduced in the American diet.

Industries Went Ballistic with the McGovern Report

Various food industries presented their side of the argument at a second senate hearing in 1977. This meeting resulted in a watered down version of the Dietary Goals, with less emphasis on reducing meat and dairy products. The American Medical Association also protested the McGovern Report, because it said that providing this basic knowledge on what we should eat might interfere with the medical doctor's right to prescribe, even though doctors then, and now, know nothing about human nutrition. The effects of the McGovern Report were widespread, and as a result, the consumption of meat, eggs, and milk fell, temporarily.

Industries fought back successfully with every means at their disposal, including hiring lobbyists, purchasing medical and nutrition experts, launching huge advertising campaigns, driving the nutrition education of our children with their bias, and funding nutrition research that favored their products. Their success can be measured by the [US food availability data](#), which documents an increase in mean daily total energy intake from 2,057 kcal in 1970, to 2,405 kcal in 1990, and 2,674 kcal in 2008. We eat more oil, meat, and dairy now than when the McGovern Report was published in 1977. The incidence of obesity and type-2 diabetes has both doubled in that same period of time. These figures are undeniable evidence that industry won and Americans lost.

The McGovern Report also stressed the urgency to act: "Ischemic heart disease, cancer, diabetes and hypertension are the diseases that kill us. They are epidemic in our population. We cannot afford to temporize. We have an obligation to inform the public of the current state of knowledge and to assist the public in making the correct food choices. To do less is to avoid our responsibility."

Americans Have the Right to Know the Truth about Diet

Because the dietary goals of the McGovern Report of 1977 and those of industry were so different, the USDA did not adopt the recommendations. However, in 1980 the USDA partnered with the Health and Human Services department to issue the first edition of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which eventually became the USDA Food Pyramid and is now represented as [My Plate](#). These guidelines are published every five years and serve as the cornerstone of federal nutrition policy and nutrition education activities. Unfortunately, the Dietary Guidelines for Americans are written with the health of the [agribusinesses in mind](#) and emphasize the importance of consuming meat, fish, and dairy products.

One of government's most important jobs is to protect the community against foreign and domestic threats. The food industry is a domestic threat. Government intervention is needed to stop the abuse of American citizens. Or as stated in the McGovern Report, "It is the responsibility of government at all levels to take the initiative in creating for Americans an appropriate nutritional atmosphere—one conducive to improvement in the health and quality of life of the American people."

Regulation Can Help Solve Our Current Health Crises

Policies of industry deregulation, most implemented over the past two decades, have led to collapse, beginning in 2007, of the financial and housing industries. Our current government is now trying to help US citizens damaged by greedy businesses (subprime mortgage lending institutions and Wall Street). Lack of government controls (deregulations) of the food, pharmaceutical, and medical businesses has been the major contributor to the health crises Americans are now facing. The US government has an obligation to help right these major wrongs, too, beginning with the programs already under their jurisdiction.

The US government has financial and legal control over the kinds of food that are fed to our children, to our military, and to the poor. Thirty percent of children and 50 percent of our military personnel are overweight. Underneath all that excess fat is a lot of sickness. If Senator George McGovern had prevailed, this catastrophic state of bad health would have never occurred. Unfortunately, the food industry is still winning and the predictions are that [44 percent of Americans](#) will be obese (not just overweight) by the year 2030.

The future, however, is ours to change. With government action similar to that proposed by Senator George McGovern 35 years ago, almost overnight, students and soldiers can be made as fit as [long distance runners](#) are today, and as strong as the [mighty gladiators](#) who fought in Roman coliseums were two millennia ago. Both of these winning classes of athletes have always been powered by starch-based, near vegan diets, not by red meat, poultry, fish, dairy, eggs, sugar, and oil—the current diet of children and soldiers.

The “least privileged” in any society suffer most. [Obesity is more prevalent](#) among African Americans (44 percent) than among Mexican Americans (39 percent) and Non-Hispanic Whites (33 percent). Subsidy food programs for the poor include food stamps and coupons from the WIC (Women, Infants and Children) programs; these benefits are not redeemable for alcohol or tobacco. Products with animal-derived ingredients, vegetable oils, and simple sugars must also be outlawed from these programs. The 1977 McGovern Report made it clear that “without Government and industry commitment to good nutrition, the American people will continue to eat themselves to poor health.” And they have. The future health for individuals, and the economic and military success of America, depends on fixing the malnutrition that is devastating our great society.

Stop Treating Dietary Diseases with Drugs and Surgery

The 1977 McGovern Report made it clear that modern medicine cannot save us: “As a Nation we have come to believe that medicine and medical technology can solve our major health problems. The role of such important factors as diet in cancer and heart disease has long been obscured by the emphasis on the conquest of these diseases through the miracles of modern medicine. Treatment not prevention has been the order of the day. The problems can never be solved merely by more and more medical care.” Current medical therapy means: fat, sick people carry around a bag full of drugs and have their bodies marked by surgical scars. The results from treating chronic diseases are never good health.

Over the past 40 years science has confirmed the fact that dietary diseases cannot be prevented or cured with medical interventions (tests, pills and surgery):

- 1) Aggressive drug therapy increases weight gain, death, heart disease, and hypoglycemia for people with type-2 diabetes.
- 2) Treatment of elevated cholesterol with statins does not save lives (except for the very sick).
- 3) Multiple Sclerosis medications costing \$40,000 per year do not slow disability.
- 4) Lowering blood pressure with medications does not save lives (except for the very sick).
- 5) Heart surgery (bypass and angioplasty) does not save lives in typical patients: those treated for chronic disease (atherosclerosis).
- 6) Treatments for common dietary cancers, like breast, prostate, ovary, and colon, fail to save lives.
- 7) Efforts for early detection (PSA, mammograms, colonoscopies, etc.) of dietary diseases bring millions of people into the medical businesses, causing great harm and little, if any, good.

Expert Panels with Power Are Needed

The business of treating dietary diseases with drugs and surgery can be curtailed by forming expert panels to protect the average American, who has no time or expertise to study and analyze the effects of medical prescriptions. These panels must be given respect and the power to stop dangerous tests and treatments. For example, based on expert panel recommendations, Medicare Medicaid could stop today reimbursement to doctors, laboratories, and hospitals for PSA tests or heart surgeries for chronic coronary artery disease (heart disease).

Unfortunately, these days our expert panels are ignored. Medical practice has not changed since the US Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) and the American Cancer Society told doctors to stop recommending PSA testing (prostate cancer screening); these intrusive blood tests will continue without an authority like the US government stepping in. The Cochrane Collaboration recommended in 2012 the end to routine mammograms, but no one is listening. When the American College of Cardiology and the American Heart Association [told cardiologists to stop](#) operating on stable coronary artery disease in 2007 they responded with no reduction in the one million angioplasties performed each year in the US.

The “Free Market” Will Not Regulate Itself

The goal of business is profit, often regardless of the consequences to others. It is nearly impossible for people to act in ways contrary to their means of making money. Fortunately, there are business settings where good nutrition for people and avoiding harmful tests and treatments do result in profit. For example, self-insured businesses (like Whole Foods Market) save money by supporting their healthy, treatment-free, employees. (Whole Foods Market has made major investments in educating their employees through the McDougall Program and other health-promoting programs.) For-profit Kaiser Permanente is another example. This medical insurance plan makes money by collecting premiums and cutting expenses. Obviously, they win when their clients are properly nourished and disease-free. However, most medical insurance companies operate under a different business model.

Twenty-five years ago I went to medical insurance companies like Blue Cross/Blue Shield of California and Aetna to ask for coverage of my dietary approach to heart disease rather than bypass surgery. It made sense to me to spend \$5,000 on education instead of spending \$90,000 on surgery—especially when my approach had better results. One insurance company representative explained to me that they would rather pay for the surgery because this way they did not have to depend upon the patient's cooperation; simply by operating, the pain (angina) was relieved, sometimes. I countered that many people would rather eat beans than have their chest cracked open. The next insurance company representative gave me a more believable reason for staying with their current lucrative practices. He explained, "John, you don't get it. We (the insurance company) take a piece of the pie. The bigger the pie, the bigger our share." Profits come from the sicknesses and the treatments that always follow a bad diet.

America's Health Crisis Must Be Solved Quickly

The McGovern Report began with, "We must acknowledge and recognize that the public is confused about what to eat to maximize health.... The public wants some guidance, wants to know the truth, and hopefully today (a date in January, 1977) we can lay the cornerstone for the building of better health for all Americans, through better nutrition."

For America to become healthy, the US government has an obligation to unambiguously inform physicians and patients that meat, dairy, vegetable oils, and simple sugars are making people fat and sick. A scientific truth must be told: A diet of starches, vegetables, and fruits will [cause loss of excess body weight without hunger](#) and [cure common diseases](#), including heart disease, type-2 diabetes, and arthritis. Although 35 years has gone by, it is still not too late. The time has come to implement Senator George McGovern's Dietary Goals for the United States with a vengeance for the billions of people sickened and killed by the food and medical industries.