



Climate change: not your fault

Photo illustration by Ronaldo Bolaños, Abbas Iqbal and Christine Vo

EDITORIAL

The Shorthorn Editorial Board urges citizens to advocate for large-scale anti-climate change measures

Excessive heat warnings line the weather app as the discussion surrounding global warming, like the sun, bears down on Texas.

The Shorthorn Editorial Board believes that climate change is not your fault. The biggest sources of climate change come from governments and corporations not prioritizing human lives. Changing the governing bodies' values might be the way to fight climate change.

This summer, like so many before, is record-breaking. In the past 10 years, there were over 1,600 days where the heat matched or broke a record in Texas. It's more than double the 561-day average in the decades before 2013, according to The Texas Tribune.

For many Texans, growing accustomed to the record-breaking temperatures is simply a part of life in the state. The danger of the heat is often swept to the side.

Heat is the deadliest form of weather — responsible for 148 deaths in 2022, with hurricanes responsible for 114 deaths and flooding responsible for 91 deaths, according to the National Weather Service.

With more frequent and intense weather due to climate change, the cost of repairing the damage becomes more expensive. Of the 363 climate disasters where the damages exceed \$1 billion since 1980, 166 disasters were in Texas, according to the National Centers for Environmental Information.

This makes Texas one of the most economically affected states by climate change.

While climate change might appear to be a divisive issue in the United States, there seems to be some agreement. Roughly, 74% of Americans believe that global warming is happening and 61% believe that it is at least somewhat caused by human activity, according to a 2023 survey conducted by Yale and George Mason University.

Many are becoming more aware of their carbon footprint with people using more products without plastic

to reduce pollution. These items are often great for the environment and do combat climate change, but making the switch might not fully stop it.

As difficult as it might be to accept, saving the sea turtles won't save the ice caps.

One of the main causes of climate change is greenhouse gas emissions. Many solutions to global warming revolve around cutting fuels like coal, gas and oil from our electric use, transportation and industrial production.

The average American cannot stop the use of fossil fuels in their daily lives; this is largely up to politicians and corporate leaders.

While there are ways for people to reduce their carbon footprint with things like electric cars and solar panels, these products are often expensive and many are unable to afford making the switch.

Fighting climate change should start with those in power, but the average citizen is not powerless and should advocate for how the earth and the environment should be treated.

Despite the agreement on the existence of man-made climate change, many Americans don't prioritize addressing it. When asked about what should be a top priority for the president, only 37% of Americans listed addressing climate change as a top priority, making it 17th out of 21 issues in a 2023 survey conducted by the Pew Research Center.

There is a dissonance between American belief in climate change and the need for action. Often, Americans prioritize their individual wants over the needs of the environment.

This can be seen in the Maui wildfire aftermath, which revealed a division between residents and the tourism industry. The fires are already the deadliest in modern U.S. history with 114 people confirmed dead as of Aug. 19, according to NBC News.

Despite the massive destruction and loss of life, the tourism industry continues to thrive, with Maui county mayor Richard Bissen encouraging

tourists to visit unaffected regions. There is a dependence on the visitor industry, being responsible for roughly 70% of every dollar generated on the island, according to the Maui Economic Development Board.

Even as Maui tries to rebuild and mourn, locals are being forced to cater to this massive industry, with tourists snorkeling in the same waters where crews are looking for survivors.

These large industries often prioritize their profits over the needs of the environment and the people who live in them. This can be seen even in Texas.

During the 2021 ice storms in Texas, millions of Texans experienced water and power disruptions, and these conditions resulted in the deaths of roughly 246 people, according to The Texas Tribune.

While many politicians were quick

THE ISSUE:
Climate change continues to worsen and is creating a dangerous planet.

WE THINK:
No single action a person can take will solve climate change.

TAKE ACTION:
People should push for systemic protection of humans and the environment.

to blame failing renewable energy sources for the power disruptions, natural gas power experienced the biggest decrease in production, according to The New York Times.

The main reason natural gas power sources failed was the lack of a winterized energy grid. While many politicians and regulators were aware of how susceptible the energy grid was to extreme cold weather after the 2011

winter storm, the legislature failed to enforce regulations that might have protected the grid from failure.

This allowed energy corporations to cut costs at the expense of protecting Texas. This attitude prioritizes profits over people and allows for the continued use of fossil fuels despite the catastrophic effects.

Often, the planet is protected when people are protected.

There is sometimes an overlap between civil rights advocacy and environmental protection. The United Farm Workers of America is a workers union founded in 1962, which advocates for the rights of farm workers, especially Latino migrants.

One of the things they fought for was worker protection from pesticides, some of which were causing birth defects, cancer and burns. This union was key in banning dangerous pesticides from commercial use, thereby protecting human health and preventing water pollution.

As climate change becomes more present in people's daily lives, the anxiety around stopping it increases. Rather than focusing on the actions individuals can take, advocating for systemic protection of people and the planet could bring real change.

The Shorthorn Editorial Board believes while you might not be responsible for climate change, everyone should fight it. Advocating for politicians and corporations to start valuing people over profits should be the first step towards a healthy planet.

The Shorthorn Editorial Board is made up of opinion editor Chris Huddleston, managing editor Drew Shaw, copy desk chief Deekota Diaz, associate news editor Hannah Garcia, engagement editor Ella Scott, multimedia editor Christine Vo and sports editor Isaac Appelt. Appelt was not present for this editorial decision, so news editor José Romero stepped in along with editor-in-chief Mandy Huynh.

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COLUMN

An environmental wake-up call

Held v. Montana showcased how the youth can protect the planet through activism

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Among the applause for the decision made in the *Held v. Montana* climate trial Aug. 14, the weight of the judgment dawned on me in a way I can't describe.

Although it wasn't a federal case, it marks the first climate case to reach the state and ending in victory for the plaintiffs in U.S. history. My generation, Generation Z, has been labeled as the 'soft' generation caught up in performative activism. Yet here we are, making the initiative to change that label with landmark litigation.

Held v. Montana was filed in 2020 by Our Children's Trust, a nonprofit law firm that provides youth strategic, campaign-based legal services to secure their right to a clean environment, according to their website.

They were the group backing the

sixteen young people testifying against the state of Montana. Montana's Environmental Policy Act contained a stipulation that forced the state to disregard the impact of greenhouse gas emissions on the environment, which the plaintiffs argued to be unconstitutional. The judge agreed, meaning the case has come to a close as a step forward for environmental law.

According to *The New York Times*, Montana's attorney general's office is seeking to take Montana's climate case to the supreme court — potentially pushing the issue to a national stage.

The plaintiffs brought up everything that we have been stressed about for ages. They validated climate science by acknowledging the fossil fuel industry has been a major source of pollution for Montana, bringing in scientists and other experts to testify.

The destruction of our planet, thanks to climate change, has always loomed over our heads, culminating in a phenomenon known as "climate anxiety," rates of which have disproportionately affected younger people.

In a survey conducted in 2021 by *Lancet Planetary Health* journal, out of 10,000 youths from ten different countries, 84% said they were at least "moderately worried" about climate

change while 59% said they were "very or extremely worried." *The Lancet* began as an independent general medicine journal in 1823 and eventually evolved as a family of journals covering various scientific topics.

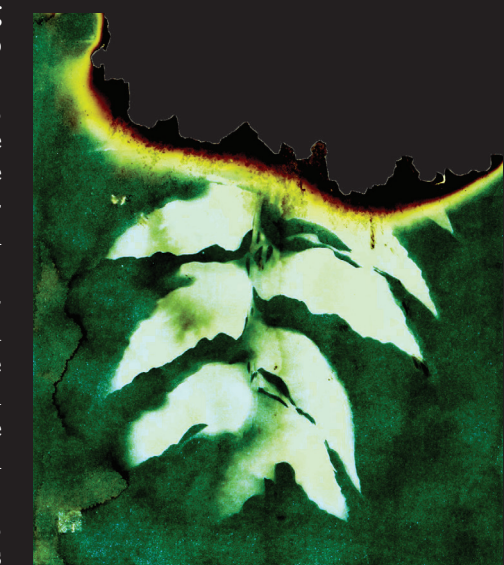


Photo illustration by Christine Vo

This case is just a step forward along a gravelly, long-winded road. Sure, it serves as a shift in the campaign to protect the planet — but we shouldn't let it stand on its own.

It's clear that no amount of reusable straws has stalled the inevitable

reality of climate change. It's time younger people start playing in the appropriate ballpark: politics and the law.

Many of us have felt that because climate change is such a mountainous problem, there's no way that the average person can hope to improve our situation. *Held v. Montana* proves us wrong.

If we take it step by step, it's a wake-up call that we can shape the world the way we want. The world is our stone, and the government is our chisel.

We should start realizing the value of participating in politics, whether through campaigns, pressuring those in power through emails and physical letters, attending rallies or even joining civil lawsuits such as this one.

Being educated on pressing issues is one thing, but taking your knowledge and applying it to your cause is another. There are multiple ways we can weaponize our worries into firepower for the betterment of our future.

With enough work, the implementation of stronger laws can become a nationwide phenomenon.

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