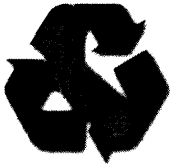


Prohibition on Plastic Bags  
October 3, 2011

**ATTACHMENT F**  
**PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED ON THE ADDENDUM**



# Californians Against Waste

Conserving Resources. Preventing Pollution. Protecting the Environment.

September 30, 2011

Bill Bogaard, Mayor  
City of Pasadena  
100 N. Garfield Avenue, Room S228  
Pasadena, CA 91109

## Re: Reduction of Single-Use Carryout Bags – Support

Dear Honorable Mayor Bogaard,

Californians Against Waste (CAW) respectfully urges the City of Pasadena to pass a proposed ordinance restricting single-use carryout bags. Local jurisdictions around the state including Los Angeles County have already passed similar ordinances. With this action the City of Pasadena would gain the environmental and economic benefits of a ban while providing continuity for plastic bag legislation in the area.

Plastic bags are a costly, environmentally damaging, and easily preventable source of litter and pollution. Light and aerodynamic, plastic bags are uniquely litter-prone even when properly disposed of and pose a serious threat to the marine and riparian environment. Los Angeles estimates that plastic bags compose up to 25% of its litter, and that the city will spend \$85 million to meet TMDL requirements for Los Angeles River and Ballona Creek.

And while prohibiting single-use plastic bags may initially result in some return to the use of single-use paper bags—a likelihood that's reduced by a minimum price requirement on paper bags—any environmental and economic cost associated with recycled paper bags will be more than offset by the elimination of single-use plastic. The manufacture and use of paper bags generates lower greenhouse gas emissions than the manufacture and use of plastic bags. Moreover, three years after the City of San Francisco's ban, local stores are reporting modest (18%) or no increase in demand for single-use paper bags.

CAW has worked with retailers, bag manufacturers, and local governments to try to manage single-use plastic bags through recycling. We sponsored AB 2449 (Levine), which provides in-store recycling for plastic bags. Despite establishing the state's largest collection infrastructure for any single material, efforts to manage single-use plastic bags through recycling have been unsuccessful. The 2009 statewide recycling rate for plastic bags was only 3%. Last year's efforts to enact a statewide ban of plastic bags with AB 1998 (Brownley) failed to pass Senate on the last day of session. Municipalities, who are primarily responsible for the clean-up of plastic litter, should not wait for state action.

Plastic marine pollution is a global problem with local solutions. The phase out of single-use plastic bags is a proven solution for combating plastic bag litter. We thank you for your environmental leadership and strongly urge you to continue this tradition of leadership by passing a plastic bag ban.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Murray".

Mark Murray  
Executive Director

cc: City Council Members

## Schmidt, Ursula

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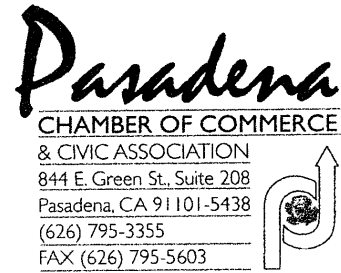
**From:** Katherine Gillespie <kwdgill@mac.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 28, 2011 12:02 PM  
**To:** Schmidt, Ursula  
**Subject:** Plastic Bags

I am writing to support the City Council Proposal to prohibit the distribution of single-use plastic carryout bags, including biodegradable plastic, for consumer use, and establish a charge for specified single-use paper carryout bags. Plastic bags are a pollutant to the urban landscape. Here are my reasons for supporting the proposal:

- These bags are loading the landfills where it may take hundreds of years for them to break down.
- These bags are made of polyurethane, a composite created from such non-renewable components as natural gas and crude oil, depleting the natural resource.
- These bags are harmful to both land and marine animals who suffer from strangulation, choking, and entanglement by plastic bags,
- These bags pose a hazard to children for choking and suffocation.
- These bags are a major source of litter.

Please give consideration to my comments.

Katherine Gillespie  
186 Sierra View  
Pasadena, CA 911105



August 8, 2011

Pasadena City Council  
City of Pasadena  
100 North Garfield Avenue  
Pasadena, CA 91101

Re: Ban on single-use plastic bags

Dear Mayor Bogaard and Pasadena City Council Members,

The Pasadena Chamber of Commerce has significant reservations about the proposed ban on single-use plastic bags at grocery and convenience stores within the City of Pasadena. Our most significant concern is that the use of plastic bags should be handled on a state-wide or perhaps even nationwide level, not piecemeal by individual local jurisdictions. We are not opposed to the current proposal, however we have put forth an alternative we would prefer to see used to reduce the use of plastic bags in Pasadena.

Here are our other concerns:

1. This is a state-wide issue that should be dealt with by the California Legislature. By imposing additional costs on Pasadena located companies, the City would be placing those companies at a competitive disadvantage with similar businesses in adjacent communities. Is it really fair for the Vons or Trader Joe's in Pasadena to charge more of its customers than the same store in Eagle Rock or Arcadia?
2. Research on the environmental impact of plastic bags is very contradictory, and very little of the research stands as independent, scientific inquiry. Those studies with findings opposing bans are funded primarily through the plastics industry and those supporting bans are by environmental groups led by enthusiasts, not scientists. When there are independent studies, such as that done for the Australian government in 2002, they show that 60% to 80% of all plastic bags are reused in households to line trash cans, pick up after dogs, as lunch bags, etc. That same study shows that only about 45% of first-time plastic bag use is generated by grocery and convenience stores so that you are not addressing 55% of the issue with this proposed ordinance.
3. According to reports in the UK, the estimates that 100,000 marine mammals died as a result of ingesting plastic bags is false. The study cited found that 100,000 marine mammals died as a result of ingesting fishing tackle each year.
4. A 2007 study by The Ocean Conservancy found that only 8% of the material collected during oceanfront cleanups each year are plastic bags. A greater problem was plastic food wrappers which accounted for 9.6% of material cleaned up. Cigarettes and cigarette filters account for 27% of the material collected. Other studies note that there is no data available about the impact ingesting small plastic particles has on sea life or secondary consumers of sea life.

5. Other studies note that there is no data available about the impact ingesting small plastic particles has on sea life or secondary consumers of sea life. While studies have shown that plastic particles can be found in the stomachs of fish, sea mammals and whales, there is no data to show that plastic has been absorbed or digested by the animals, and none that shows ingesting small amounts of plastic has any more detrimental effect on sea animals than it does on humans. One study also found that the plastic particles found in sealife and floating in the Pacific are a least ten years old.
6. The use figures in your report seem greatly overstated. Your staff report claims that 75 million plastic grocery bags are used in Pasadena each year. In 2002, the entire country of Australia used 2.1 billion plastic bags. Pasadenans therefore are using 547 bags per person per year while Australians were using 84 bags per year per person before they made any efforts to curb single use plastic bag use. Here in the U.S. it is estimated that 100 billion single use plastic bags are consumed each year by 300 million people. Which is 300 bags per person. To give you some perspective, the figure given by your staff would mean that my household of four uses 2188 plastic bags per year, or 5.9 bags per day. Are we really using nearly twice as many bags per person here in Pasadena than the rest of the country? The math simply does not work. At the very least, you should send your staff back to do thorough research on the subject and come back with realistic, verifiable numbers related to plastic bag use in Pasadena.
7. Pasadena residents and businesses can recycle single-use plastic bags. Here are the plastic items that can be recycled through the Pasadena curbside program, according to the city recycling brochure: All plastics 1 through 7, Styrofoam labeled 6 (styrofoam that is not numbered DOES NOT go in your recycling container), Plastic grocery bags (bundle bags together). We have no figures for Pasadena recycling of plastic bags. Considering that Pasadena is one of the few communities that can recycle plastic bags through our curbside program, wouldn't figures specific to Pasadena be helpful in this discussion?
8. Switching from plastic bags to paper bags will result in more greenhouse gas emissions and water consumption as paper bags require significantly more energy and water to manufacture. Also manufacturing and transportation of paper bags is more impactful on the environment, from a greenhouse gas standpoint.
9. If Pasadena wants to reduce the use of plastic grocery bags, incentives to encourage alternatives to plastic bags could be much more effective and not negatively impact the ability of our local businesses to compete in our regional marketplace. For example, has the City considered providing reusable bags free to the stores to hand out? Not knowing how much money was spent in staff time and other support by the city on the current tax initiative, an amount that I imagine was not insubstantial, I would expect that money put into incentive programs could have already had an impact on plastic bag use in grocery stores.
10. The Board of the Pasadena Chamber understands that the state legislature has banned taxing or adding additional costs to the use of plastic bags until 2014. While that may be the case, the Board also thinks a more creative approach may reach the desired result while avoiding the legislature's ban. At the same time, we feel it is important for the City of Pasadena and those interested in curbing single-use plastic bags to communicate with our local legislators to stand up to special interests and to remove that ban prior to 2014.
11. The Pasadena Chamber of Commerce would like to see alternate proposals brought before the City Council for consideration, as we feel the current staff recommendation reduces environmental impact in one area while increasing it in another. Clearly what works best is a fee based deterrent that does not ban any use, but imposes costs that can be used to incentivize use of recycled multi-use bags.

The Pasadena Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors is not opposed to a tax or ban on single-use plastic bags. We simply feel this is an issue that should be dealt with on a statewide or even national level. We do not want our members put at a competitive disadvantage compared to their peers in adjacent communities, especially when the research on the issue is so muddled and inaccurate, and the potential impacts on the environment from Pasadena's proposed action are so negligible. We would also like to see some creative thought put into how Pasadena can really impact the environment in a positive way and create an ordinance that has the desired environmental impact without creating alternate and potentially greater impacts.

For your information, we are including the two legislative staff analyses that were performed for the Chamber by our interns from USC, along with their recommendations.

If the City Council is intent on passage of an ordinance to limit use of plastic and paper bags in grocery stores in a way that really helps reduce the impacts on the environment caused by grocery bags, the Board of Directors of the Pasadena Chamber of Commerce would prefer to see a different approach taken--one that addresses the plastic bag issue head-on without causing other, perhaps more significant, impacts to the environment that would result from the move to paper bags.

The Board of Directors of the Pasadena Chamber of Commerce would like to see the City of Pasadena impose a \$0.10 to \$0.20 fee to have any and all groceries bagged by a store employee. That fee would be imposed regardless of whether the bag used was paper or plastic and would be a cost imposed to have the service of bagging done by a store employee, not based on the type of bag used. That fee would be waived if the person receiving the service brought their own bags, regardless of whether those were reusable, paper or plastic. Please see the attached editorial from the Los Angeles Times arguing for an across the board imposition of costs to diminish consumption of single use bags. While we agree that statewide rescission of the legislation that bans charging for plastic bags would be the simplest and best way to deal with the issue, we feel the Chamber alternative provides a workable, legally defensible and impactful solution to the single use bag problem.

In Ireland, imposing a cost equivalent to \$0.20 per plastic bag reduced use of the bags by 95%. That is a significantly positive impact on the environment, while not creating any burden, save the cost of collection, on the retailer.

In addition, the Board of the Pasadena Chamber of Commerce would like to see the funds collected under this program used to purchase reusable bags that the affected stores could give out to their customers free of charge. As there would not be additional costs imposed on the stores, there would be no need to compensate each store as a result of the Chamber proposal. That money could then be used to supply multi-use bags as well as for education and awareness efforts to inform consumers of the program so they are not caught by surprise when the additional costs are imposed.

We feel this approach would have a much more positive impact on the environment as it does not encourage switching from plastic bags to the more greenhouse gas impactful paper bags. Further, this approach would provide funds that could be used to subsidize the cost of reusable bags for the stores, which the Chamber Board would like included in any program to reduce the consumption of single-use bags of any kind within the City of Pasadena. Funds could also be used for education and even environmental clean-up locally, depending on the level of funding provided. This approach could also be used to expand the ordinance to include other users of single-use bags and even other forms of single-use packaging.

To really reduce the use of plastic grocery bags, the Board of Directors of the Pasadena Chamber of Commerce prefers incentives to encourage alternatives to plastic bags. Such incentives, funded through the program outlined above, could be much more effective in helping change shopper behavior and not negatively impact the ability of our local businesses to compete in our regional marketplace or impose additional costs for them to do business in Pasadena. For example, has the City considered providing reusable bags free to the stores as an alternative to plastic bags?

While we appreciate that your staff took time to analyze the Chamber alternative, we have to take issue with your staff's characterization of the Chamber proposal and their cursory analysis. For example, the nexus between the Chamber's proposal and the positive environmental impacts are equally the same (or perhaps even more impactful) than the current staff recommendation.

You may feel that you have accomplished something in the name of environmental stewardship by adopting the staff recommendation, but are you doing all you could be doing with an ordinance designed to reduce the consumption single use bags?

Also, we feel this approach, since it does not impose a fee on the commodity of single use plastic bags, would withstand any legal challenge that might be brought by an interest group. We also would suggest, since this would still allow for the use of plastic bags, as opposed to a blanket ban, the likelihood of a legal challenge is minimal. Should there be a lawsuit, the City of Pasadena could always consider the total ban proposal that is currently being recommended by your staff.

The Pasadena Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors still feels this is an issue that should be dealt with on a more comprehensive level and would prefer to see action taken on a statewide or even national scale. We do not want our members put at a competitive disadvantage compared to their peers in adjacent communities, especially when the research on the issue is so muddled and inaccurate, and the potential impacts on the environment from Pasadena's proposed action are so negligible, or perhaps even detrimental.

We are also aware that the passage of Proposition 26 in November, 2010, may restrict the ability of the City of Pasadena to impose new fees and taxes of any kind without the approval of 2/3 of the voters. The Chamber Board suggests the Pasadena City Attorney's office thoroughly research whether Proposition 26 limitations apply in this case and whether imposition of any sort of fee can be done absent approval of a super-majority of voters within the jurisdiction.

The current proposal to ban single-use plastic grocery bags and substitute paper bags with a \$0.10 charge applied does not warrant our support, but we would be supportive of a program, such as that we outlined above that deals with the issue directly without adding additional environmental impacts. The Chamber Board would be happy to work on a mutually agreeable program such as that outlined above that we can recommend to the Pasadena City Council for approval.

Thank you,

  
Dennis Buckley  
Chair of the Board of Directors

Encl. Legislative analysis, Los Angeles Times editorial of 7-25-11, National Geographic article of 9-2-10  
Cc: Pasadena City Council, M. Beck, U. Schmidt, D. Miller, V. Bertoni

Daniel Rabiner

Subject: Plastic Bag Ban

April 30, 2011

Recommendation:

My recommendation is to support a Plastic Bag Tax versus a ban. A tax will reduce the use of plastic bags in a significant manner while raising funds for enforcement and to educate the populous regarding the harms of plastic bags and benefits of reducing their usage. The reason I'm opposed to a ban is plastic bags have a place where paper bags lack durability and functionality.

Plastic versus Paper Bags:

Plastic bags are a superior bag for a number of goods such as frozen goods or goods that will produce condensation. In addition paper bags while biodegradable are not particularly more environmentally friendly pre-use as they require more energy to produce. This second finding regarding the environmental benefits of paper versus plastic is why a Judge ordered an injunction to Oakland's plastic bag ban in 2008 while asking for further study.

State versus City:

Statewide or Countywide legislation is superior to localities since pollution doesn't stop at the border of Pasadena when it happens nearby. Plastic bags ending up in rivers, streams, or watersheds will affect the quality of life of Pasadena residents even if they impose a ban or tax unilaterally. Also educating the population can be done more effectively on a broader scale.

Why a Tax over a Ban:

A tax will reduce the usage of plastic bags except where they are far superior to paper bags. In Ireland when a tax was introduced nationwide in 2002 of 24 cents (US value) per bag, the use of plastic bags dropped from 328 annually to 21 per capita. The revenue generated was used to fund environmental cleanup, education outreach, and enforcement of the policy.

Other alternative methods that you may prefer can be found at: <http://cga.ct.gov/2008/rpt/2008-R-0421.htm>



To: Mr. Paul Little - CEO, Pasadena Chamber of Commerce  
From: Omar El Shal - Legislative Analyst Intern, Pasadena Chamber of Commerce  
Subject: Pasadena Ban on Plastic Bags  
Status: Will not clear City commission until late May, final vote is expected at the earliest in early June  
Date: May 13, 2011

## **SUMMARY: ORDINANCE FOR PASADENA'S BAN ON PLASTIC BAGS**

### *OVERVIEW*

City of Pasadena officials are currently considering a complete ban on plastic bags and a 10 cents surcharge on paper bags. The proposed ban would “prohibit the use of plastic bags at drug stores, pharmacies, supermarkets, grocery stores, convenience food stores, food markets and liquor stores”.<sup>i</sup> Exempted from the paper bag surcharge would be families using federal or state assistance to buy groceries.<sup>ii</sup>

### *OPPONENTS AND SUPPORTERS OF THE BALLOT*

Proponents argue that plastic bags have an onerous environmental effect, particularly to marine life and state beaches.<sup>iii</sup> On the other hand, opponents argue that paper bags are worse than plastic for the environment due to deforestation and carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere by industrial plants used in paper manufacturing and transport of paper bags.<sup>iv</sup>

The City ordinance mirrors a ban by LA County that bans plastic bags in grocery stores in non-incorporated areas, with the exception of fruit, vegetables or raw meat. Similarly, on May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2011, the city of Long Beach became the 22<sup>nd</sup> city in the United States to ban the use of plastic bags.<sup>v</sup> The Long Beach ordinance bans plastic, compostable plastic and degradable plastic bags.<sup>vi</sup> Effective Aug. 1, the ban will cover grocery stores and pharmacies with at least 10,000 square feet or annual sales of \$2 million or more, and place a 10-cent tax for each carryout paper bag.<sup>vii</sup> Abroad, the European Union is also currently considering a ban on plastic bags across the EU, with some major EU states, including Italy, having already banned the use.<sup>viii</sup>

### **ANALYSIS: PAPER OR PLASTIC?**

The following analysis relies predominately on a 2007 Washington Post article that utilized sources from both the plastic and paper industry to construct several facts regarding the environmental impacts of paper and plastic bags. While I reviewed other literary sources, the Washington Post analysis is largely representative of the extent of scientific consensus on the issue and provides a comprehensive source of data on environmental facts.

#### *Energy*

Plastic requires 594 British Thermal Units (“BTU”) to produce, while paper requires *four times* more energy at 2,511 BTU’s.<sup>ix</sup>

#### *PRODUCTION PROCESS*

Plastic bags are produced from oil refining waste products while paper is of course, produced from trees. In considering the environmental impact of plastic bags, attention should be given to: <sup>x</sup>

- Extraction of oil;
- Separation of products in the refinishing process;
- Manufacturing of plastics.

On the other hand, the environmental impact of paper includes: <sup>xi</sup>

- The process of obtaining timber and whether it comes from a sustainable managed forest (i.e. most industrial timber is from plantations);
- Management of the environmental processing plant.

### *Pollution*

The production of plastic bags generates 70 percent less air pollution and 50 times less water pollutants than paper bags. <sup>xii</sup>

The non-partisan Environmental Literacy Council (“ELC”) estimates that all types of plastic compose 14 to 28 percent of trash volume nationwide, with compression reducing it to 9 to 12 percent. On the other hand, since plastic bags require less space than paper bags, the ELC estimates that all paper occupies half of nationwide landfill volume. <sup>xiii</sup> The percentage of landfill volume taken up by plastics has remained steady since 1970 even as plastics have become more widely used. <sup>xiv</sup> The ELC also estimates that since plastic is 9 times lighter than paper, transportation of the same number of paper bags would require seven additional regular size trucks, which also imposes an environmental impact in the form of truck pollution. <sup>xv</sup>

However, every year, nationwide thousands of marine mammals die as a result of plastic. It has been reported, for example, that turtles mistake floating plastic for jelly fish and ingest them, possibly choking or blocking their intestines. <sup>xvi</sup>

### *Recycling*

Overall, it takes 98% less energy to recycle a pound of plastic than it takes to recycle a pound of paper. <sup>xvii</sup> Paper is degradable, but not completely, because modern landfills lack the water, light, or necessary oxygen. <sup>xviii</sup> On the other hand, petroleum-based plastic bags are non-degradable; however, as discussed earlier, they take significantly less space than paper bags. <sup>xix</sup> One to 3 percent of plastic bags used nationwide are recycled, while ten to fifteen percent of paper bags are recycled. <sup>xx</sup>

## **IMPACT ON PASADENA AND LOS ANGELES BUSINESS**

### *The Environmental Impact*

The proposed ordinance will have negligible environmental effect in the area. Research suggests that, while not the most efficient available bag, plastic bags are overall *more* environmentally friendly than paper bags or *at worst* of equal detriment to the environment. Therefore, if reducing the environmental impact of plastic and paper bags is the main concern of the City Council, Pasadena should ban both plastic and paper bags and/or impose a surcharge for the use of both.

Additionally, the Council could either force the use of reusable bags or subsidize (perhaps via a small fee on trash collection dues), the allocation of biodegradable reusable bags to every home in Pasadena. Rather than imposing a trash fee or a resident fee, the Council may also consider raising funds by allowing Companies to advertise their product/company logos on biodegradable bags, which would either incentive new suppliers to manufacture these bags, or boost the sales of current manufacturers by selling advertising space. This method could pay both the City and resident expenditures for a proposed reusable bag program, while also giving

local companies the benefits of advertising space. Overall, a ban on both plastic and paper bags would have a far greater environmental impact than banning only plastic bags.

*Impact on Business*

The opportunity cost of a paper and/or plastic ban would include seriously hurting plastic and paper bag manufacturers, as well as, to a lesser extent chemical products manufacturers. To be truly effective, this type of ban should be an LA County and/or statewide ban. However, as environmental policy trends suggest, it is only a matter of time before ordinances banning the use of plastic bags spread across California. Without all of LA County also adopting the same measure, this ordinance will have a minimal environmental impact and be largely symbolic.

**RECOMMENDATION**

In its current form, I recommend that the Pasadena Chamber of Commerce oppose or abstain from supporting the ordinance. Overall, both plastic and paper are negative environmentally and more environmentally friendly substitutes exist. As I briefly proposed in the analysis, this ordinance can be better structured to maximize the environmental benefit. Additionally, a plastic and/or paper bag ban would be better served by a common ordinance by all of LA County (not just unincorporated areas, which compose only 14% of the greater LA county population).

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- <sup>i</sup> [http://www.pasadenastarnews.com/news/ci\\_17971257#ixzz1MpaRIMTZ](http://www.pasadenastarnews.com/news/ci_17971257#ixzz1MpaRIMTZ)
- <sup>ii</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>iii</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>iv</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>v</sup> <http://www.plasticsnews.com/headlines2.html?id=22040&channel=284>
- <sup>vi</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>vii</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>viii</sup> <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5goLXvtTbEwQQZK06KWpt6O9URsA?docId=CNG.e1e3011dfa5c9e06530678b2c4c69dcc.201>
- <sup>ix</sup> <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/graphic/2007/10/03/GR2007100301385.html?referrer=emalmlink>
- <sup>x</sup> <http://www.enviroliteracy.org/article.php/1268.html>
- <sup>xi</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>xii</sup> <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/graphic/2007/10/03/GR2007100301385.html?referrer=emalmlink>
- <sup>xiii</sup> <http://www.enviroliteracy.org/article.php/1268.html>
- <sup>xiv</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>xv</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>xvii</sup> <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/graphic/2007/10/03/GR2007100301385.html?referrer=emalmlink>
- <sup>xviii</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>xix</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>xx</sup> Ibid.

## Are Plastic Grocery Bags Sacking the Environment?

John Roach  
for National Geographic News

September 2, 2003

The "paper or plastic" conundrum that vexed earnest shoppers throughout the 1980s and 90s is largely moot today. Most grocery store baggers don't bother to ask anymore. They drop the bananas in one plastic bag as they reach for another to hold the six-pack of soda. The pasta sauce and noodles will get one too, as will the dish soap.

Plastic bags are so cheap to produce, sturdy, plentiful, easy to carry and store that they have captured at least 80 percent of the grocery and convenience store market since they were introduced a quarter century ago, according to the Arlington, Virginia-based American Plastics Council.

As a result, the totes are everywhere. They sit balled up and stuffed into the one that hangs from the pantry door. They line bathroom trash bins. They carry clothes to the gym. They clutter landfills. They flap from trees. They float in the breeze. They clog roadside drains. They drift on the high seas. They fill sea turtle bellies.

"The numbers are absolutely staggering," said Vincent Cobb, an entrepreneur in Chicago, Illinois, who recently launched the Web site <http://Reusablebags.com> to educate the public about what he terms the "true costs" associated with the spread of "free" bags. He sells reusable bags as a viable solution.

According to Cobb's calculations extrapolated from data released by the United States Environmental Protection Agency in 2001 on U.S. plastic bag, sack, and wrap consumption, somewhere between 500 billion and a trillion plastic bags are consumed worldwide each year. Of those, millions end up in the litter stream outside of landfills—estimates range from less than one to three percent of the bags.

Laurie Kusek, a spokeswoman for the American Plastics Council, said the industry works with its U.S. retail customers to encourage recycling of plastic bags, which are in high demand from companies such as T rex in Winchester, Virginia, for use in building materials.

"We also feel it is important to understand that plastic grocery bags are some of the most reused items around the house," she said. "Many, many bags are reused as book and lunch bags as kids head off to school, as trash can liners, and to pickup Fido's droppings off the lawn."

But like candy wrappers, chewing gum, cigarette butts, and thousands of other pieces of junk, millions of the plastic bags end up as litter. Once in the environment, it takes months to hundreds of years for plastic bags to breakdown. As they decompose, tiny toxic bits seep into soils, lakes, rivers, and the oceans, said Cobb.

## Plastic Fantastic

The Film and Bag Federation, a trade group within the Society of the Plastics Industry based in Washington, D.C., said the right choice between paper or plastic bags is clearly plastic.

Compared to paper grocery bags, plastic grocery bags consume 40 percent less energy, generate 80 percent less solid waste, produce 70 percent fewer atmospheric emissions, and release up to 94 percent fewer waterborne wastes, according to the federation.

Robert Bateman, president of Roplast Industries, a manufacturer of plastic bags—including reusable ones—in Oroville, California, said the economic advantage of plastic bags over paper bags has become too significant for store owners to ignore. It costs one cent for a standard plastic grocery sack, whereas a paper bag costs four cents, he said.

"The plastic bags are so inexpensive that in the stores no one treats them as worth anything ... they use two, three, or four when one would do just as well," he said.

First introduced in the 1970s, plastic bags now account for four out of every five bags handed out at the grocery store. "When you look at it as a product, it is an unbelievable success story," said Cobb.

The success of the plastic bag has meant a dramatic increase in the amount of sacks found floating in the oceans where they choke, strangle, and starve wildlife and raft alien species around the world, according to David Barnes, a marine scientist with the British Antarctic Survey in Cambridge, England, who studies the impact of marine debris.

Barnes said that plastic bags have gone "from being rare in the late 80s and early 90s to being almost everywhere from Spitsbergen 78° North [latitude] to Falklands 51° South [latitude], but I'll bet they'll be washing up in Antarctica within the decade."

Bateman said that plastic bags are becoming a victim of their success. "The industry is at the stage where its success has caused concerns and these concerns need to be addressed responsibly," he said. Among other initiatives, Bateman supports the development of biodegradable plastic bags, a technology that has made strides in recent years.

## Plastax to the Rescue?

Plastic bag litter has become such an environmental nuisance and eyesore that Ireland, Taiwan, South Africa, Australia, and Bangladesh have heavily taxed the totes or banned their use outright. Several other regions, including England and some U.S. cities, are considering similar actions.

Tony Lowes, director of Friends of the Irish Environment in County Cork, said the 15 cent (about 20 cents U.S.) tax on plastic bags introduced there in March 2002 has resulted in a 95 percent reduction in their use. "It's been an extraordinary success," he said.

According to Lowes, just about everyone in Ireland carries around a reusable bag and the plastic bags that once blighted the verdant Irish countryside are now merely an occasional eyesore. Cobb believes a similar tax in the U.S. would have a similar effect on reducing consumption.

The American Plastics Council is wary of such a tax in the U.S. They say it would cost tens of thousands of jobs and result in an increase in energy consumption, pollution, landfill space, and grocery prices as store owners increase reliance on more expensive paper bags as an alternative.

Bateman said the Irish tax of about U.S. 20 cents per bag is too high, but that a tax of 3 to 5 cents could have a positive impact on reducing plastic bag consumption by changing people's behavior.

"Having bags charged has some merits because it gets them used more responsibly," he said. For example, instead of a bagger using six bags to package a person's dinner, the bagger might use just two.



latimes.com/news/opinion/la-ed-plastic-20110725,0,5652255.story

# latimes.com

Editorial

## Paper or plastic? Pay up

**So far, California has managed to do all the wrong things in attacking the environmental scourge of plastic carryout bags.**

July 25, 2011

Anyone seeking advice on how to reduce the environmental scourge of plastic carryout bags should avoid consulting the state of California, which has managed to do all the wrong things so far.

The best approach would be a statewide levy on plastic and paper bags. Such fees have been remarkably successful where they've been adopted. Use of plastic bags fell by more than 90% at IKEA stores when the company imposed a 5-cent fee.

California started its campaign against the bags with a wimpy mandate that supermarkets had to provide recycling bins for them. That didn't work. Only 5% of the 120,000 tons of carryout plastic bags with handles that Californians use each year is recycled. Many of those bags end up along the coastline; they are the second-most-common trash item found on the beach. (The ones without handles, such as those used to bag produce or to wrap newspapers, are usually disposed of properly.) They are major contributors to the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, a mass of floating plastic that is bigger than Texas.

At the same time the Legislature imposed the ineffective recycling program, it was pushed by the plastic bag industry into prohibiting cities and counties from imposing fees on the bags. As a result, there is now a patchwork of local bans, which causes headaches for supermarket chains that have to follow different rules in different places; the bans also unnecessarily reduce consumer choice. In 2008, the plastic bag industry sued to stop a ban that had been imposed in Manhattan Beach, saying it required a full environmental impact report. Last week, the California Supreme Court ruled in the city's favor. It was illogical to think that bans in smaller cities would have a negative effect on the environment, the court decided, leaving open the question of whether large municipalities such as Los Angeles would have to do the studies. Many cities that held off on imposing bans until the case was decided are now expected to move ahead.

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City Clerk

Councilmember JACQUE ROBINSON  
100 N Garfield Ave, Room S228  
PO Box 7115  
Pasadena, CA 91109-7215

Date: 5/6/2011

**Re: Support for a Citywide Plastic Carryout Bag Ban**

I am writing to urge you to continue your ongoing environmental leadership and ban the free distribution of single use plastic carryout bags at all stores within Pasadena. An estimated 6 billion plastic bags are used each year in Los Angeles County, and it is likely that millions of plastic carryout bags are used annually in Pasadena. Unfortunately, these bags are seldom recycled. Designed only for single-use, these bags have a high propensity to become litter. In fact, data from the 2006 International Coastal Clean-up Day show that over 120,000 discarded bags were collected in California, making bags one of the most abundant types of litter found in the State.

Plastic bags severely threaten wildlife and degrade the environment. For months after a storm, streamside vegetation, in-stream habitats, and creek bottoms are littered with seemingly endless piles of plastic shopping bags. Streams and storm drains carry plastic bags to the ocean where they are frequently mistaken as food and ingested by marine life.

Plastic bag litter is also costly to clean up; public agencies collectively spend millions of dollars each year on clean-up, enforcement, and prevention. Unfortunately, despite this effort, plastic bags remain ubiquitous in the environment, partially because of careless consumer treatment and also due to the difficulty associated with their clean-up.

The City of Pasadena has an opportunity to be a true leader in dealing with plastic bag pollution. Voluntary recycling programs do not work. We urge the City to adopt an ordinance banning plastic and biodegradable carryout bags at all retailers citywide. Biodegradable plastic bags do not decompose on land or in aquatic environments. Shifting to a biodegradable bag alternative will not alleviate the environmental blight caused by single-use bag litter. We also recommend the City of Pasadena include a retail fee on paper carryout bags in its ordinance. Paper bags are also fraught with environmental impacts. Paired with a plastic and biodegradable bag ban, a paper bag fee is critical in driving the most sustainable option, reusable bags.

The urgency for local government to take action has never been greater. Banning plastic bags in the City of Pasadena will help enhance the city's recreational and tourism economy, improve the quality of life for residents, free valuable landfill space, and restore our environment to a cleaner and healthier state. We urge you to make the City of Pasadena better with expeditious action on this issue.

Signed



Name:

TIM HOOTEN

Address:

695 E. POPPYFIELDS DR.

ALTADENA CA 91001

**Schmidt, Ursula**

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**From:** Elbert Newton [elbertwalkernewton@yahoo.com]

**Sent:** Tuesday, April 19, 2011 7:37 PM

**To:** Schmidt, Ursula

**Subject:** plastic bag ban

Dear Environmental Advisory Commission,

I am writing to express my support for the proposal to ban plastic bags in the city of Pasadena. We have come to a critical time when every such measure brings us closer to actually meeting the global challenges of peak oil and climate crisis.

A plastic bag ban may seem trivial, but each action that the city takes raises the consciousness of the general population and has a ripple effect toward actually sustaining our planet. Plastic containers of all sorts do not decompose; they have become a blight on nature, an infestation of our oceans and oceanic creatures, and a very wasteful use of fossil fuel. When we say we throw it away, where is away? Native American tradition wisely says that we must always be looking to the seventh generation beyond us to weigh the impact of our actions on Mother Earth.

Please do your part to see that this measure passes. Thank you for all your good work in greening our city.

Sincerely,

Bert Newton

## Schmidt, Ursula

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**From:** Eva Nichols [eva@caltech.edu]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 20, 2011 12:50 AM  
**To:** Schmidt, Ursula  
**Subject:** Plastic Bag Ban

Dear Environmental Advisory Commission,

I am writing to tell you that I support the proposal to ban plastic bags in the city of Pasadena. We earnestly need to begin making changes to our everyday lifestyles in order to protect the future of our planet, and saving resources that would go in to making plastic bags is an easy way to start down the road in the right direction. Think about the amount of fossil fuel that we could save if everyone in Pasadena used cloth or recycled plastic bags for their shopping!

This measure would be an important step in furthering the environmental protection movement, and I'm really excited that Pasadena has the opportunity to lead such a movement. Please support this proposal!  
Thanks for giving our one and only Earth the respect it deserves!

Sincerely,

Eva Nichols

## Schmidt, Ursula

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**From:** Melissa Kew [mkew@uchicago.edu]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 19, 2011 10:03 PM  
**To:** Schmidt, Ursula  
**Subject:** Support for Ban on Plastic Bags in Pasadena

Dear Environmental Advisory Commission,

I am a home-owner in the city of Pasadena. I am writing to express my support for the proposal to ban plastic bags in the city of Pasadena. We have come to a critical time when every such measure brings us closer to actually meeting the global challenges of peak oil and climate crisis.

A plastic bag ban may seem trivial, but each action that the city takes raises the consciousness of the general population and has a ripple effect toward actually sustaining our planet. Plastic containers of all sorts do not decompose; they have become a blight on nature, an infestation of our oceans and oceanic creatures, and a very wasteful use of fossil fuel.

Please do your part to see that this measure passes. Thank you for all your good work in greening our city.

Sincerely,  
Melissa Kew

**Schmidt, Ursula**

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**From:** Carl Stilwell [cbstilwell@earthlink.net]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 19, 2011 6:58 PM  
**To:** Schmidt, Ursula  
**Subject:** Plastic bags ban

Dear Environmental Advisory Commission,

I am writing to express my support for the proposal to ban plastic bags in the city of Pasadena. We have come to a critical time when every such measure brings us closer to actually meeting the global challenges of peak oil and climate crisis.

A plastic bag ban may seem trivial, but each action that the city takes raises the consciousness of the general population and has a ripple effect toward actually sustaining our planet. Plastic containers of all sorts do not decompose; they have become a blight on nature, an infestation of our oceans and oceanic creatures, and a very wasteful use of fossil fuel. When we say we throw it away, where is away? Native American tradition wisely says that we must always be looking to the seventh generation beyond us to weigh the impact of our actions on Mother Earth.

Please do your part to see that this measure passes. Thank you for all your good work in greening our city.

Sincerely,

Carl Stilwell  
65 N. Allen Ave #222  
Pasadena CA, 91106

4/25/2011

**Schmidt, Ursula**

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**From:** Conner [cspears32@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 19, 2011 6:09 PM  
**To:** Schmidt, Ursula  
**Subject:** Regarding the Plastic Bag Ban

Dear Environmental Advisory Commission,

I am writing to express my support for the proposal to ban plastic bags in the city of Pasadena. We have come to a critical time when every such measure brings us closer to actually meeting the global challenges of peak oil and climate crisis, and also the challenges of major pollution due to the usage of plastic bags.

A plastic bag ban may seem trivial, but each action that the city takes raises the consciousness of the general population and has a ripple effect toward actually sustaining our planet. Plastic containers of all sorts do not decompose; they have become a blight on nature, an infestation of our oceans and oceanic creatures, and a very wasteful use of fossil fuel. They are also just plain ugly, and may hurt the way our beautiful city looks. When we say we throw it away, where is away? Native American tradition wisely says that we must always be looking to the seventh generation beyond us to weigh the impact of our actions on Mother Earth, which means we need to start now.

Please do your part to see that this measure passes. Thank you for all your good work in greening our city. Thank you for reading this letter and taking the ban under consideration.

Sincerely,

Conner Spears

Northeast Los Angeles Transition  
Pasadena/Altadena/Eagle Rock/Highland Park  
<http://nela-transition.wikispaces.com/>

**Schmidt, Ursula**

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**From:** janet carmichael [jancarma@yahoo.com]

**Sent:** Tuesday, April 19, 2011 5:37 PM

**To:** Schmidt, Ursula

**Subject:** In support of plastic bag ban in Pasadena! then California!..then the world!!!needed

Dear Environmental Advisory Commission,

**I agree 100% with this letter that was written to you!!! It is the least we can do!! Thank you for thinking about our addiction to being wasteful !!**

**Using indiscriminately fossil fuels (plastics)  
has got to stop!**

I am writing to express my support for the proposal to ban plastic bags in the city of Pasadena. We have come to a critical time when every such measure brings us closer to actually meeting the global challenges of peak oil and climate crisis.

A plastic bag ban may seem trivial, but each action that the city takes raises the consciousness of the general population and has a ripple effect toward actually sustaining our planet. Plastic containers of all sorts do not decompose; they have become a blight on nature, an infestation of our oceans and oceanic creatures, and a very wasteful use of fossil fuel. When we say we throw it away, where is away? Native American tradition wisely says that we must always be looking to the seventh generation beyond us to weigh the impact of our actions on Mother Earth.

Please do your part to see that this measure passes. Thank you for all your good work in greening our city.

Sincerely,

**Janet Carmichael**

Northeast Los Angeles Transition  
Pasadena/Altadena/Eagle Rock/Highland Park  
<http://nela-transition.wikispaces.com/>

**Schmidt, Ursula**

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**From:** Katja Luxem [kluxem@caltech.edu]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 19, 2011 5:31 PM  
**To:** Schmidt, Ursula  
**Subject:** Plastic Bag Ban

Dear Environmental Advisory Commission,

I am writing to express my support for the proposal to ban plastic bags in the city of Pasadena. We have come to a critical time when every such measure brings us closer to actually meeting the global challenges of peak oil and climate crisis.

A plastic bag ban may seem trivial, but each action that the city takes raises the consciousness of the general population and has a ripple effect toward actually sustaining our planet. Plastic containers of all sorts do not decompose; they have become a blight on nature, an infestation of our oceans and oceanic creatures, and a very wasteful use of fossil fuel. When we say we throw it away, where is away? I would love to see Pasadena become more sustainable, and plastic bags are a great hindrance to this goal.

Please do your part to see that this measure passes. Thank you for all your good work in greening our city.

Sincerely,

Katja Luxem  
*Student, California Institute of Technology*



**Schmidt, Ursula**

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**From:** mrhoppy@gmail.com on behalf of Erica Lee [erica.l.h.lee@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 19, 2011 5:16 PM  
**To:** Schmidt, Ursula  
**Subject:** In support of plastic bag ban in Pasadena needed

Dear Environmental Advisory Commission,

I am writing to express my support for the proposal to ban plastic bags in the city of Pasadena. We have come to a critical time when every such measure brings us closer to actually meeting the global challenges of peak oil and climate crisis.

A plastic bag ban may seem trivial, but each action that the city takes raises the consciousness of the general population and has a ripple effect toward actually sustaining our planet. Plastic containers of all sorts do not decompose; they have become a blight on nature, an infestation of our oceans and oceanic creatures, and a very wasteful use of fossil fuel. When we say we throw it away, where is away? Native American tradition wisely says that we must always be looking to the seventh generation beyond us to weigh the impact of our actions on Mother Earth.

Please do your part to see that this measure passes. Thank you for all your good work in greening our city.

Sincerely,

Erica Lee  
Northeast Los Angeles Transition  
Pasadena/Altadena/Eagle Rock/Highland Park  
<http://nela-transition.wikispaces.com/>

**Schmidt, Ursula**

---

**From:** Nancy Busacca [nancy.busacca@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 19, 2011 4:21 PM  
**To:** Schmidt, Ursula  
**Subject:** One more plastic bag question...

Hi Ursula,

Just curious whether plastic produce bags are included in the ban. In the interest of full disclosure I should point out that I make and sell a Re Usable produce bag...

And, I'm sure you know that I support the Ordinance regardless of whether it includes those rolls of produce bags.

Thanks!

Nancy Busacca  
h 626-791-0766  
c 626-497-3959  
<http://nancysbest.com/>

The time has come to ask not what Mother Nature can do for you but what you can do for Her....

---

**From:** Robert Brummel [mailto:rjbrummel@yahoo.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 19, 2011 2:44 PM  
**To:** Schmidt, Ursula  
**Subject:** Plastic bag ban

Dear Environmental Advisory Commission,

I am writing to express my support for the proposal to ban plastic bags in the city of Pasadena. We have come to a critical time when every such measure brings us closer to actually meeting the global challenges of peak oil and climate crisis.

A plastic bag ban may seem trivial, but each action that the city takes raises the consciousness of the general population and has a ripple effect toward actually sustaining our planet. Plastic containers of all sorts do not decompose; they have become a blight on nature, an infestation of our oceans and oceanic creatures, and a very wasteful use of fossil fuel. When we say we throw it away, where is away? Native American tradition wisely says that we must always be looking to the seventh generation beyond us to weigh the impact of our actions on Mother Earth.

Please do your part to see that this measure passes. Thank you for all your good work in greening our city.

Sincerely,

Robert Brummel  
1235 Mar Vista Ave.  
Pasadena, CA 91104

Northeast Los Angeles Transition  
Pasadena/Altadena/Eagle Rock/Highland Park  
<http://nela-transition.wikispaces.com/>

**Schmidt, Ursula**

---

**From:** jnordman2@earthlink.net  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 19, 2011 2:31 PM  
**To:** Schmidt, Ursula  
**Subject:** Please ban plastic bags in Pasadena

Dear Environmental Advisory Commission,

I am writing to express my support for the proposal to ban plastic bags in the city of Pasadena.

We have come to a critical time when every such measure brings us closer to actually meeting the global challenges of peak oil and climate crisis.

A plastic bag ban may seem trivial, but each action that the city takes raises the consciousness of the general population and has a ripple effect toward actually sustaining our planet. Most plastic containers of all sorts do not decompose. They have become a blight on nature, an infestation of our rivers, oceans and all aquatic creatures. They are a very wasteful use of fossil fuel at a time of diminishing supplies. Ultimately there is no safe way to dispose of them without harm to land or water.

Please do your part to see that this measure passes, for our health now, and for a healthier future.

Thank you for all your good work in greening our city.

Sincerely,

January Nordman  
989 Lehigh St.  
Altadena, CA 91001  
jnordman2@earthlink.net

Member:  
Northeast Los Angeles Transition  
Pasadena/Altadena/Eagle Rock/Highland Park  
<http://nela-transition.wikispaces.com/>