

August 19, 2013

**Re: Support Lander-Chin bill to dramatically reduce plastic bag use in New York City**

Dear New York City Council Member,

We, the undersigned organizations, strongly support the bill being introduced by Council Members Lander and Chin, which will dramatically reduce plastic pollution and waste by requiring stores in New York City to charge a minimum of ten cents (retained by the retailer) on all carryout bags (paper or plastic) provided at the register.

Plastic bags are a costly, environmentally-harmful, and easily-preventable source of litter and pollution. Light and aerodynamic, plastic bags are so uniquely litter-prone that even when properly disposed of they often litter our urban landscape. Plastic bags pose a serious threat to our harbor and beaches and when they are no longer visible to the naked eye, they can degrade into tiny particles that adsorb toxins and contaminate our food chain, our water and soil quality.

Single-use plastic bags are costly to consumers and taxpayers. Today the costs of “free” plastic bags at retail outlets are simply passed onto consumers in the form of higher prices for the products they purchase. Moreover, the NYC Office of Management and Budget estimates that New Yorkers use 5.2 billion carryout bags per year, the vast majority of which are not recycled. As of 2008, plastic bags accounted for over 1,700 tons of garbage hauled by DSNY per week, costing taxpayers an estimated \$10 million annually to dispose of these bags in out-of-state landfills and waste facilities.

Other jurisdictions have demonstrated that plastic bag legislation works:

- Washington D.C.’s 2009 5-cent bag tax reduced usage (and resulting litter) by as much as 60%.
- Los Angeles County’s 2010 ban on plastic bags and ten-cent charge on paper bags at large stores reduced single-use bag usage by 95% (including a 30% reduction in paper bag usage).
- San Jose's ban on plastic bags and ten-cent charge on paper bags has resulted in a decrease in the average number of single-use bags used per customer from three bags to 0.3 bags per visit since that ordinance took effect in 2012.

In California, over 79 local governments, including the cities of Los Angeles, San Jose, and San Francisco have already adopted bans on plastic bags and/or charges for other bags provided at the register. The results from these existing policies demonstrate both environmental and economic success, and public support.

This legislation includes common-sense provisions including ones that exempt transactions using food stamps from the bill’s requirements, a requirement that official warnings be issued to retailers before any violations can be issued, no burdensome record-keeping requirements for affected business establishments, and the creation of a citywide education and reusable bag giveaway campaign in cooperation with community-based groups and other partners.

For all these reasons, the legislation is already picking up considerable support for civic and community organizations, as well as business groups and government officials.

In short, the proposed legislation makes economic and environmental sense. We urge you to support it and become a co-sponsor.

Sincerely,

  
Eric Goldstein  
Policy Director  
Natural Resources Defense Council



  
Marcia Bystryn  
Executive Director  
New York League of Conservation Voters



  
Peter H. Kostmayer  
Chief Executive Officer  
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no impact project

  
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THE 5 GYRES INSTITUTE  
FOR A PLANET FREE OF PLASTIC POLLUTION

