

RESPONSE TO FIA LETTER

Do not be fooled by the misrepresentations of the representative of the Food Industry Alliance of NY State contained in his letter dated March 1, 2013. The FIA is a lobbying organization for the grocery industry that is opposed to any government regulation that affects its members. The letter cites two studies that are replete with misinformation and have no scientific validity.

The study "A Survey on the Economic Effects of Los Angeles County's Plastic Bag Ban" was financed and conducted by the National Center for Policy Analysis ("NCPA"). One of the authors of the study is a "senior fellow" with NCPA and has authored many studies and analyses that support NCPA's political objectives. According to Wikipedia, the NCPA is a conservative "right-wing think tank" supported by a wide range of conservative foundations, the insurance industry and corporations such as ExxonMobil. Its president is a libertarian economist who writes a blog with comments opposing many government initiatives. The NCPA published documents citing its own researchers that denies global warming and predicts dire consequences of healthcare reform.

The other author is an analyst at the Reason Foundation. According to its website, the "Reason Foundation advances a free society by developing, applying and promoting libertarian principles, including individual liberty and free markets." Neither author has a Ph.D. degree or is associated with a university. There is no way to verify whether the study has scientific validity or even whether the published results are accurate. The study also presents conclusions related to the environment that were not part of its own research and simply restate other falsehoods that have been circulated by conservative interests.

The report entitled "Grocery Bag Bans and Foodborne Illness" was self-published by its authors on the website Social Science Research Network. This site accepts and publishes anything submitted to it without peer review. It was then published on the NCPA website as legitimate research. The Abstract of the study states that plastic bags "are thought to endanger marine life and add to litter", ignoring the extensive evidence that it really does. It states that reusable grocery bags contain potentially harmful bacteria and ignores facts that such bacteria are on everything people touch in public places. An article critical of the study points out that the study was not scientifically valid because it just compared San Francisco ER visits before and after the ban without proving any cause and effect relationship and without considering obvious alternative explanations for the results. Tomas Aragon, the health officer for the City of San Francisco and an epidemiologist at UC Berkeley, referred to the study as an example of "ecological fallacy". The study itself was funded by the American Chemistry Council, a lobbying organization funded by the chemical industry that has opposed plastic bag bans throughout the country and has sued municipalities in attempts to intimidate them to prevent bans.

The studies are biased and cannot be considered as independent research since they are funded by conservative organizations opposed to any government regulation that affects their members without regard for the environment. The studies were not peer reviewed, were not accepted by any academic publications and do not reflect any scientific validity.