



Californians Against Waste

Conserving Resources. Preventing Pollution. Protecting the Environment.

July 20, 2015

Janet Wolf, Board of Supervisors Chair
Santa Barbara County
105 East Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Re: Single-Use Bag Ordinance – Support with Amendments

Dear Chair Wolf,

We urge your support for the single-use bag ordinance scheduled to come before the Board of Supervisors next week.

Californians Against Waste (CAW) is a recycling advocacy organization with thousands of members across Southern California. Because single-use plastic bags simply cannot be efficiently recycled now or in the foreseeable future, we are leading a grassroots effort to reduce the 13 billion plastic bags our state discards every year.

Single use bag ordinances are effective in reducing flood potential, environmental blight and cleanup costs associated with plastic shopping bags, as evidenced by data from multiple jurisdictions, most recently Los Angeles County and San Jose. One year after implementing a local ban, San Jose reposted an 89% reduction in plastic bag litter in storm drains, a 59% reduction in city streets and neighborhoods, and a 60% reduction in creeks and rivers. In addition to eliminating the primary source of single-use plastic shopping bags, LA County found that the plastic bag ban, when paired with a ten cent charge on paper bags, capped paper bags at 90% of ‘pre-law’ levels.

Where LA County falls short, however, is in their lack of implementation of a minimum ten cent charge on reusable plastic bags as well. Both San Francisco and Palo Alto added this charge and amended their original plastic bag bans when they experienced the results of the loophole created by allowing thicker reusable plastic bags to be given out for free. Honolulu, Hawaii, which recently implemented its plastic bag ban on July 1, 2015, received a lot of press coverage concerning this issue and is now considering the same amendment. While we fully support the intent of the ordinance, we highly suggest a minimum charge on reusable bags be added to improve the effectiveness of the ordinance.

This policy has proven to be popular with the public. A November 2014 USC Dornsife/Los Angeles Times poll found there is strong and broad support for the ban/charge model, with 60% approval rates. That poll also shows that support for banning plastic bags is even higher in communities that have already eliminated them.

Last year, we successfully passed a statewide ban on plastic bags (SB 270 - Padilla, de León, Lara), but this popular success has been suspended by an industry-funded referendum. Three out-of-state plastic bag manufacturers have spent nearly \$3 million. Municipalities, who are primarily responsible for the clean-up and cost of plastic litter, can take action now to reduce litter and waste and stop paying these out-of-state polluters. The phase out of single-use bags is a proven solution for combating waste and plastic bag litter costs.

Plastic pollution is a global problem with local solutions. CAW appreciates the County’s leadership and urges you to adopt the single-use bag ordinance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Murray".

Mark Murray
Executive Director