



plasticbaglaws.org

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## **New York City Students Hold Conference to Discuss Plastic Bag Bans: Council Member Pledges to Introduce Legislation**

*New York City, March 4, 2013* – On Saturday March 2, 2012, The Hewitt School's Earth Committee and The Green Schools Alliance hosted a student conference focused on banning single-use plastic bags in New York City. The conference was a call to action by students – and was a tremendous success.

Hewitt School students Jocelyn Goldberg and Caroline Hoffman said they were inspired to put together the conference upon learning that New York, unlike other major U.S. cities, was not seriously considering implementing a ban or bag fee on plastic bags.

The student conference resulted in very tangible results: a pledge to move forward with legislation.

"The campaign to confront plastic bag waste in New York City begins today," said Council Member Brad Lander (Brooklyn's 39th District). "When you see more plastic bags than birds on the branches of many city trees, the urgency of this issue is clear. We are looking at what has worked around the country in order to introduce an effective bill in the coming months."

"If you're up for it, I'm up for it," Lander said of partnering with student leaders to push for the legislation.

The conference included opening remarks by New York State Assemblymember Micah Kellner, who is currently sponsoring legislation in the state assembly that would allow New York cities to impose a fee on plastic bags.

The "All Star" panel of experts at the conference also included Ron Gonen, NYC's Deputy Commissioner for Recycling and Sustainability, Eric Goldstein, NRDC's New York City Environment Director, Jennie Romer, founder of plasticbaglaws.org, Stiv Wilson of 5 Gyres Institute, and Maite Quinn of Sims Municipal Recycling.

"Today is incredibly exciting because it is the first big step in moving toward a plastic bag ban. The students brought together key people that can actually make a plastic bag ban a reality in New York City – a council member, a state assembly member, someone from the mayor's office, key environmental groups, and one of the city's main recycling companies," said Romer.

Romer was instrumental in the adoption of San Francisco’s expanded plastic bag ordinance and moved to New York last summer to build a coalition – the Clean Seas Coalition – made up of groups and individuals interested in adopting a plastic bag ordinance in New York City. “I look forward to continuing to build the coalition and work with these inspiring students.”

Quinn spoke of the extra energy and costs that plastic bags pose on the recycling process in NYC, which is why Sims supports such legislation. “In addition to the plastic bags that have commingled material in them, people also send us a lot of plastic bags inside plastic bags. All of this material is presently going to landfill and not being recycled,” she said. “We don’t want to see excess plastic bags coming into our stream. It costs us money to handle it and it costs us money to bring it to a landfill.”

Gonen encouraged the students to call their council members and have their parents and neighbors call their council members to get the legislation moving ahead, stressing that public engagement will be the only way that such legislation would move forward.

New Yorkers who want to get involved in the campaign to ban plastic bags in NYC should register at [www.bagitnyc.org](http://www.bagitnyc.org) for updates and action alerts.



The Hewitt School Earth Committee Co-Presidents Caroline Hoffman and Jocelyn Goldberg.

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