VOTE YES TO PROTECT CALIFORNIA’S SINGLE-USE PLASTIC BAG BAN!

Plastic pollution affects every lake, river, sea and ocean in the world. According to a new report launched at the World Economic Forum, at least 8 metric tons of plastic debris enters the ocean every year, which is the equivalent of dumping the contents of one garbage truck into the ocean every minute. The report warns that there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish by 2050 if we don’t do something about it.¹

The impacts to wildlife are tremendous. Zooplankton at the base of the food chain are ingesting microplastics. Up to 90% of seabirds already have plastic in their guts. A quarter of fish sold at supermarkets contain plastic debris. Countless marine mammals die from ingestion or entanglement. Sea turtles eat jellyfish which floating plastic bags in the ocean closely resemble.² The Ocean Conservancy recently deemed plastic bags as the #2 deadliest threat to sea turtles, birds, and marine mammals.³

In an attempt to mitigate an easily preventable form of plastic pollution, Senate Bill 270 (Padilla, De Leon, Lara) was adopted by the Legislature and signed by Governor Jerry Brown establishing a statewide ban on the distribution of single-use plastic grocery bags at most stores in 2014. It was the culmination of a 5 year effort that included the adoption of hundreds of local bag bans and the support of local governments, environmental groups, grocers, retailers and labor organizations.

Immediately after SB 270 was signed, out-of-state plastic bag manufacturers spent more than $3 million on a paid signature gathering effort to qualify a referendum for the November 2016 ballot for voters to decide its fate. This postponement of the law has resulted in the continued distribution of more than 192 million single-use plastic bags every week.

In the wake of the referendum, many communities have renewed efforts to ban plastic bags, bringing the latest total to 147 California cities and counties—nearly 40% of the state.

² http://www.cawrecycles.org/recycling-news/?offset=1448308093339

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• Single-use plastic bags are damaging to the environment and wildlife, expensive to clean up, and an easily preventable source of litter.
• The average time of use of a disposable bag is 12 minutes[^4], but they persist as pollution in the environment for decades.
• Even when properly disposed of, bags tend to blow out of trash cans, solid waste vehicles and landfills into streets, parks and waterways.[^5]
• California’s Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery found that less than 3% of these single-use plastic bags are recycled in California.[^6]
• Plastic bags don’t biodegrade, but instead break into small pieces that can attract surrounding toxins to contaminate the environment and food chain.[^7]
• According to The Ocean Conservancy, single-use plastic bags are one of the most commonly found items at beach clean ups.[^8]
• San Jose found a 76% reduction in creek and river litter, a 59% drop in park and roadside plastic bag litter, and a 69% reduction in plastic bag litter in storm drains.[^9]
• Plastic bags eat up taxpayer dollars in cleanup costs. An NRDC study says local governments across the state spend $428 million each year to prevent litter in streets and storm drains.[^10]
• Using environmental impact assumptions from an industry funded study, SB 270 would result in estimated reductions of:
  - GHG emissions by over 166,000 tons
  - Solid waste by nearly 30 million tons
  - Fossil fuel use by over 62 million tons
  - Gross energy use by nearly 3.2 billion megajoules[^11]
• To date, four out-of-state plastic bag manufacturers have spent more than $7 million in an effort to block and repeal California’s effort to eliminate polluting plastic bags from our environment.[^12]

This referendum is about more than simply banning the 10 billion remaining plastic bags polluting California every year, though that is certainly important. California’s environmental leadership has been challenged by out-of-state special interests who are profiting while marine life suffers, our environment is polluted, and taxpayers spend millions to clean up their unnecessary products.

The referendum will appear at the end of the crowded November ballot. Make sure to find it and **VOTE YES to uphold the bag ban!**

[^6]: http://calrecycle.ca.gov/plastics/atstore/AnnualRate/2009Rate.htm

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