

WHAT?

The Los Angeles City Bureau of Sanitation recently distributed a "Reusable Bag Policy Proposal Fact Sheet." Unfortunately, this so-called fact sheet was **filled with false or misleading propaganda** and **did not contain a single citation** to back up any of its purported data.

WHY?

The junk science the L.A. City Government is using to advance its ideological agenda could result in **real harm of real people**. The L.A. City Government and the Bureau of Sanitation should be embarrassed and ashamed for **using taxpayer dollars to circulate blatant misinformation**.

Misguided Bag Ban Proposal IN THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES A REALITY CHECK

IF PASSED, THIS MISGUIDED POLICY WOULD:

- Raise grocery costs for consumers
- Eliminate good manufacturing jobs that support more than 1,000 families in the Los Angeles Area
- Reduce convenience by eliminating carrying options for consumers
- Displace commerce from the City and discourage impulse buys from residents and visitors
- Encourage the use of less environmentally friendly reusable bags
- Result in a missed opportunity to expand recycling and create green jobs

BUREAU'S CLAIMS

"14% of roadside litter is paper and over 30% is plastic."

REALITY

The Bureau provides no cited source for this data. While *general* plastic may represent a significant portion of roadside litter, **seven recent litter studies from around the country demonstrate that, on average, plastic retail bags make up only 1-2% of litter.*** In fact, San Francisco reported plastic bags to be only .6% of litter before the City implemented a plastic bag ban; a year after the ban, plastic bag litter was actually reported to be .64%.

While no amount of litter is acceptable, banning a single product will not address the issue in a meaningful way.

*Based on average of litter studies from San Francisco, Washington, Florida, Texas, Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont.

"Only 5% of the 2.3 billion plastic bags used in the City each year are recycled."

This claim is not sourced. However, in another "FAQ" document, the Bureau maintains that **the data is based on "Bureau of Sanitation estimates"** derived from information contained in a 2007 staff report to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. An "estimate" derived from five year-old data in an LA County report is hardly reliable.

According to the EPA, the recycling rate of polyethylene bags, sacks and wraps in 2010 was 14.7%. Additionally, more than 90 percent of Americans report reusing their plastic bags at least once, for everything from storage to waste disposal to packing material.

Municipal Solid Waste Generation, Recycling, and Disposal in the United States Tables and Figures for 2010, U.S. EPA, November 2011 and National Plastic Shopping Bag Recycling Signage Testing, APCO, March 2007

Ban proponents conveniently ignore the high reuse rate of plastic bags when they (falsely) criticize their recycling rate.

"An average American could avoid using 500 single-use bags per year by switching to reusable bags."

This number used in this claim is greatly exaggerated. According to data from the U.S. International Trade Commission, **Americans use on average 326 plastic retail bags per year.** Consumption of plastic retail bags in the U.S. dropped by 7% from 2006 to 2008.

Polyethylene Retail Carrier Bags from Indonesia, Taiwan, and Vietnam, U.S. International Trade Commission, May 2009, Page 18

BUREAU'S CLAIMS

"Plastic bags are among the top 3 items found littered on beaches and waterways."

"Approximately 12 million barrels of oil go into the US supply of plastic bags."

"More than 40 cities and counties in California have adopted single-use bag policies, including Los Angeles County (unincorporated areas), Long Beach, Pasadena, and Santa Monica."

A REAL SOLUTION COMPREHENSIVE RECYCLING

The City of Los Angeles has invested heavily in its recycling programs and it would be shortsighted to dismantle a growing plastics recycling infrastructure – and create an expensive new government bureaucracy – by implementing the proposed ban. The City must consider the negative consequences of a ban and instead work with manufacturers, retailers and recyclers to develop a common-sense bag policy that's good for the economy, the environment and working families.

Recycling is the best solution for the environment, supports the local and U.S. economy, and is safer and more convenient for consumers.

REALITY

There is no cited source for this claim, so it is impossible to verify its legitimacy. Again, seven recent litter studies from around the country demonstrate that, on average, plastic retail bags make up only 1-2% of litter.*

*Based on average of litter studies from San Francisco, Washington, Florida, Texas, Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont.

This claim is 100% FALSE. The Fact Sheet does not provide a reference and the ultimate meaning of the claim is unclear, but it implies that petroleum oil is used to manufacture plastic bags, which is not the case. In the U.S., **85 percent of the raw material used to make plastic bags is produced from domestic natural gas.**

Analysis by Chemical Market Associates, Inc.; February, 2011

On the other hand, **most reusable bags are made in China from non-woven polypropylene – an oil-based material that cannot be recycled.** Further, a recent study by the U.K. government found that standard reusable cotton grocery bags must be reused 131 times "to ensure that they have lower global warming potential than" a single use of a plastic bag. The U.K. government study also found that if all plastic bags are reused just one time, the cotton bags would each need to be reused 327 times to have lower global warming potential than "single use" plastic bags.

Life Cycle Assessment of Supermarket Carrier Bags, U.K. Environmental Agency, February 2011, p. 61.

This claim is misleading/false. **Actually, fewer than half of the "40" California cities/counties claimed by the Bureau to have adopted bag policies have actually voted on and approved bag legislation – which is the definition of "adopt."** It is disingenuous to claim that twenty cities chose to adopt bag legislation when it was actually imposed upon them through misguided county-level decisions. Several of these ordinances are also currently being challenged in the courts.

Bag bans grow despite industry efforts. Mike Verespej, Plastics News, January 30, 2012

Most telling is the fact that no state has passed a plastic bag ban or tax to date; and all but one vote to ban or tax bags in municipalities across the country have failed at the ballot.