



## State Plastic and Paper Bag Legislation

11/11/2016

### Fees, Taxes and Bans | Recycling and Reuse

States continue to consider strategies to reduce the use of carryout plastic bags from grocery stores and other retail outlets.



Regulating bags can mitigate harmful impacts to oceans, rivers, lakes, forests and the wildlife that inhabit them. Reducing bag use can also relieve pressure on landfills and waste management.

While some states are focusing on implementing effective recycling programs, others are attempting to impose bans or fees to discourage the use of plastic bags altogether.

### Bans and Fees

In August 2014, California became the first state to enact legislation imposing a statewide ban on single-use plastic bags at large retail stores. The bill also required a 10 cent minimum charge for recycled paper bags, reusable plastic bags, and compostable bags at certain locations. The ban was supposed to take effect on July 1, 2015, but a referendum forced the issues onto the ballot for November 2016. Proposition 67 passed with 52 percent of the vote, meaning the plastic bag ban approved by the Legislature two years ago will remain. A detailed summary of the law can be found below. Voters also rejected a second measure, Proposition 65, which proposed to create an environmental fund with proceeds from a 10 cent charge for alternative bags.

Hawaii has a de facto statewide ban as all of its most populous counties prohibit non-biodegradable plastic bags at checkout, as well as paper bags containing less than 40 percent recycled material. Bans in Kauai, Maui and Hawaii counties took effect between 2011 and 2013, with Honolulu becoming the last major county to approve the ban in 2015.

In 2009, the District of Columbia enacted a law to ban the distribution of disposable, non-recyclable plastic carry-out bags and set a fee of five cents for distribution of all other disposable bags.

### NOTABLE CITIES/COUNTIES WITH PLASTIC BAG BANS AND FEES

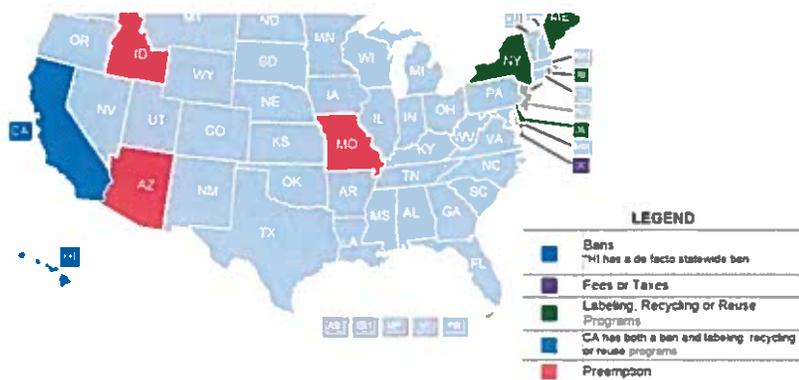
Cities with Plastic Bag Bans	Cities/Counties with Plastic Bag Fees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Austin</li> <li>▪ Cambridge, Mass.</li> <li>▪ Chicago</li> <li>▪ Los Angeles</li> <li>▪ San Francisco</li> <li>▪ Seattle</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Boulder, Colo.</li> <li>▪ Brownsville, Texas</li> <li>▪ Montgomery County, Md.</li> <li>▪ New York, N.Y.</li> <li>▪ Portland, Maine</li> <li>▪ Washington D.C.</li> </ul>

### 2015-2016 Legislative Summary

Between 2015 and 2016 at least 77 bills have been proposed by 23 states regarding the regulation of plastic bags in retail settings. Only three states—Arizona, Idaho, and Missouri—have enacted legislation this year, all of which preempt local governments from regulating the sale or use of plastic bags, including the imposition of any fees or taxes (see tables below).

### States with Enacted Plastic Bag Legislation





## Recycling Programs and Requirements

States have a long history of pursuing legislation related to labeling, recycling, and reusing plastic bags. In 1991, Maine became the first state to enact legislation requiring recycling efforts at retail stores. The statute prevents retailers from supplying plastic bags unless they provide a convenient storefront receptacle to ensure used bags are collected and recycled. Since then at least four other states—California, Delaware, New York and Rhode Island—and the District of Columbia have followed suit.

In 2006 and 2009 respectively, California and Delaware passed legislation that requires retail stores to adopt at-store recycling programs. Their similar legislation encourages the use of reusable bags, requires stores to provide an opportunity for their customers to return plastic bags and requires that plastic carry-out bags display a recycling message.

Illinois is the only state that adopted legislation regarding recycling programs in 2016. The house passed a resolution that established "Recycle Thin Film Friday" as an effort to reclaim used thin-film plastic bags and to encourage consumers to use reusable bags.

## ENACTED PLASTIC BAG STATE LEGISLATION

State	Citation	Status	Summary
Arizona	2015 Ariz. Sess. Laws, Chap. 271 (2015 SB 1241)	*Enacted	Prevents a city, town or county from regulating the sale, use or disposition of plastic bags and other "auxiliary containers" by an owner, operator or tenant of a business, commercial building or multifamily housing property. The law does not prevent a city, town or county from continuing a voluntary recycling and waste reduction program.
California	2014 SB 270	Put to Referendum	As of July 1, 2015 certain large stores are prohibited from providing a single-use plastic carryout bag to a customer, unless the retailer makes that bag available for \$0.10 and certain conditions are met.
California	2011 CA S 567	Enacted	Prohibits the sale of plastic products labeled as compostable, home compostable, or marine degradable unless it meets standard specifications. Provides for a civil penalty for a violation.
California	Cal. [Public Resources] Code § 42357.5 (2010 SB 228)	Enacted	Requires manufacturers of compostable plastic bags to ensure that the bag is readily and easily identifiable from other bags. Prohibits a compostable plastic bag sold in the state from displaying a chasing arrow resin identification code or recycling symbol in any form.
California	2006 AB 2449	Enacted	

State	Citation	Status	Summary
			Retail stores must adopt an at-store recycling program. Plastic bags used at retailers must have clearly printed "Please Return to a Participating Store for Recycling" on the bag.
Delaware	2009 HB 15; Amended by 2014 HB 198	Enacted	Encourages the use of reusable bags by consumers and retailers. Requires a store to establish an at-store recycling program that provides an opportunity for customers of the store to return plastic bags and requires all plastic carryout bags to display a recycling message.
District of Columbia	2010 B 150	Enacted	Protects the aquatic and environmental assets of the District of Columbia, bans the use of disposable non-recyclable plastic carryout bags, establishes a fee on all other disposable carryout bags provided by certain retail stores, and establishes the recurring Anacostia River Cleanup and Protection Fund.
Idaho*	2016 HB 372	*Enacted	States that any regulation regarding the use, disposition or sale of plastic bags or other "auxiliary containers" shall be imposed only by a statute enacted by the legislature.
Illinois	2016 HR 1139	Adopted	Establishes "Recycle Thin Film Friday" in the State of Illinois as an effort to reclaim used thin-film plastic bags and to encourage consumers to use reusable bags.
Maine	2010 SB 131	Enacted	Convenes a work group, through a partnership with state agencies and other appropriate entities, to work towards a viable solution to the checkout bag issue to achieve environmental benefits, maintain financial viability for manufacturers and retailers and avoid cost impacts, provides for a report to the legislature.
Maine	1991 LD 1166	Enacted	Retailers may only provide customers with plastic bags if there is a receptacle to collect used plastic bags within 20 feet of the entrance and all plastic bags collected are then recycled.
Missouri	2015 HB 722	*Enacted	Provides all merchants doing business in the state with the option to provide either paper or plastic bags. Prevents localities from imposing a ban, fee, or tax upon the use of either paper or plastic bags.
New York	2008 AB 11725	Enacted	Plastic Bag Reduction, Reuse and Recycling Act; retailers of stores are to establish in-store recycling programs that provide an opportunity for the customer to return clean plastic bags to be recycled. The plastic carryout bags provided by the store must have printed on them "Please Return to a Participating Store for Recycling."
North Carolina	2010 SB 1018	Enacted	Reduces plastic and non-recycled paper bag use on North Carolina's Outer Banks. A retailer subject to certain provisions shall display a sign in a location viewable by customers saying "[county name] County discourages the use of single-use plastic and paper bags to protect our environment from excess litter and greenhouse gases. We would appreciate our customers using reusable bags, but if you are not able to, a 100% recycled paper bag will be furnished for your use."

State	Citation	Status	Summary
Rhode Island	<a href="#">2008 SB 2565</a>	Enacted	This legislation promotes the use of paper bags by retailers. Retail establishments must offer the use of a paper bags to the consumer. Every retail establishment that provides customers with plastic bags must provide conveniently located receptacles where customers can return their clean and dry plastic bags to be recycled. Failure to comply with these laws is punishable with fines up to \$500.

\*(Pre-emption bills denoted with \*)

### 2015-2016 PENDING STATE LEGISLATION SUMMARIES

State	Bill Number	Status	Summary
Delaware	<a href="#">HB 202</a>	Pending – Carryover	Requires stores to charge five cents for every single-use carryout bag that is provided to customers. Establishes reporting requirements to track fees that are charged and distribution of bags. Expands existing at-store recycling program.
Hawaii	<a href="#">HB 1507</a>	Pending – Carryover	Convenes a working group to study methods of reducing use of single-use plastic bags and non-recyclable paper bags. Though all of Hawaii's counties have enacted bag bans, differences exist between them.
Illinois	<a href="#">SB 2224</a>	Pending	Creates the Plastic Bag and Film Recycling Act. Requires manufacturers of plastic carryout bags to register with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency and pay to the Agency an initial registration fee and annual registration renewal fee.
Illinois	<a href="#">HB 4202</a>	Pending – Carryover	Creates the Plastic Bag and Film Recycling Act. Requires manufacturers of plastic carryout bags to register with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency and pay to the Agency an initial registration fee and annual registration renewal fee. (similar legislation to IL <a href="#">SB 2224</a> )
Massachusetts	<a href="#">HB 4168</a>	Pending	Beginning Aug. 1, 2018 stores may no longer provide single-use carryout bags to customers at point of sale. Reusable bags, recycled paper bags and compostable plastic bags may be sold for a minimum of 10 cents each.
Massachusetts	<a href="#">HB 739</a>	Pending – Carryover	Prohibits retail stores from distributing plastic carryout bags at the point of sale. Retailers who provide carryout bags must use recycled paper bags.
Massachusetts	<a href="#">HB 1501</a>	Pending – Study Order	Requires every store to pay to the Commissioner of Revenue an excise of two cents per plastic bag provided to customers during the tax year—50 percent returned to store; 50 percent retained by the Commonwealth.
Massachusetts	<a href="#">SB 434</a>	Pending – Carryover	Requires the Department of Environmental Protection to promulgate regulations to prohibit the use of plastic carryout bags by 2019.
Massachusetts	<a href="#">SB 2286</a>	Pending	

State	Bill Number	Status	Summary
			Prohibits a vendor at a farmers market from providing a single-use carryout bag to a customer. Makes exceptions for bags without handles provided to protect items from damage, contamination or to contain an unwrapped food item.
Massachusetts	<a href="#">SB 2305</a>	Pending	Refers to the "Plastic Bag Reduction Act", which states that no store shall provide a single-use carryout bag to a customer at the point of sale.
New Jersey	<a href="#">AB 2396</a>	Pending	Provides for the decrease and eventual ban on use of non-compostable plastic grocery bags.
New Jersey	<a href="#">AB 3671 / SB 2349</a>	Pending	Beginning June 1, 2017, store operators must charge a five-cent fee for each single-use carryout bag provided to the customer. Exemptions: customers 65 years of age or older and individuals enrolled in SNAP, WIC or the Work First New Jersey program. Dedicates revenue from the fee to the Health Schools and Community Lead Abatement Fund.
New York	<a href="#">AB 1991 / SB 703</a>	Pending – Carryover	Creates the "Pennies for Park" program to provide funds for capital expenditures at state parks and historic sites. Imposes a one cent fee on single-use plastic carryout bags.
New York	<a href="#">AB 3636 / SB 4536</a>	Pending – Carryover	Prohibits grocery stores from providing plastic carryout bags requiring them to provide recyclable paper bags instead at no charge.
New York	<a href="#">SB 3098</a>	Pending – Carryover	Requires stores to charge five cents for each plastic bag provided to customers.
New York	<a href="#">SB 3329</a>	Pending – Carryover	Increases number of stores subject to the Plastic Bag Reduction, Reuse and Recycling Act.
New York	<a href="#">AB 5954</a>	Pending – Carryover	Requires greater number of stores in New York City to provide a recycling bin for plastic bags. Grants co-enforcement authority to the city over certain provisions of the law.
New York	<a href="#">SB 7336 / AB 9904</a>	*Pending	Prohibits the imposition and/or collection of any tax, fee or local charge on carry out merchandise bags.
New York	<a href="#">SB 7085</a>	Pending	Improves access to plastic bag collection bins by moving the bin to the entrance of the store. Requires a sign be placed above the bin to clarify that many other types of plastic bags can be recycled at these locations and that the bin must be emptied regularly. (similar to <a href="#">AB 10368</a> )
New York	<a href="#">AB 10368</a>	Pending	Relates to certain recycling program requirements; requires regular emptying of the bins; requires that information already collected by retailers regarding recycled plastic is transmitted to the Department of Environmental Conservation; requires stores to maintain records of recycling of plastic bags and make such records available.
New York	<a href="#">AB 8479</a>	Pending	

State	Bill Number	Status	Summary
			Declares that there shall be a tax of five cents upon plastic and paper shopping bags used to transport every sale of tangible personal property by consumers.
Pennsylvania	<a href="#">SB 540 / HB 1431</a>	Pending – Carryover	Imposes a two-cent fee on each plastic bag supplied by retail establishment. A portion of the collected fees will be used for the improvement of recycling practices, education and compliance.
Pennsylvania	<a href="#">HB 1280</a>	*Pending – Carryover	Prohibits the imposition of a ban, fee, or tax on the provisions of plastic bags at the point of sale.
Pennsylvania	<a href="#">HB 1281</a>	Pending – Carryover	Establishes the Plastic Bag Recycling Advisory Board. Provides for a study and report.
Rhode Island	<a href="#">SB 2527</a>	Pending	Prohibits retail sales establishments from making available plastic checkout bags, or plastic water bottles or expanded polystyrene disposable food containers at the point of sale.

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April 10, 2014

## Big Apple Weighs Fees on Single-use Plastic Bags

by Adam Phillips

The world consumes hundreds of billions of single-use plastic bags each year. Environmental activists say they are difficult to recycle, wasteful and damage the biosphere. They want to ban plastic bags or - as many communities have done - charge a fee for them at the register. But the plastic bag industry defends their use, saying people reuse plastic bags, and industry officials argue recycling is a matter of personal responsibility and should not be regulated.

City officials say New Yorkers use 5.2 billion plastic bags each year. They are offered free with nearly every supermarket, pharmacy or convenience store purchase. Many people like them, even if they sometimes feel guilty about using them.

"They're easy to use, they're lightweight, and they're easy to store," said one man.

"I don't feel good about it, but I use them sometimes because it's convenient," said a woman shopper.

But what happens to those bags after they've been used is a huge environmental problem, said Lilly Belanger of [noimpactproject.org](http://noimpactproject.org).

"They are found on beaches. They are found clogging storm drains. They are caught in trees. They are swallowed by marine life. And once that happens, we actually eat marine life. What's bad for the planet is almost always bad for us," said Belanger.

Plastic bags are made of petroleum products and natural gas, and do not biodegrade. And, Berenger added, they are difficult to recycle. So New York City spends nearly \$10 million dollars a year to send 100-thousand tons of plastic bags to landfills out of state.

Attorney Jennie Romer of [PlasticBagLaws.org](http://PlasticBagLaws.org) helps craft state and local legislation to either ban plastic bags or charge a fee for their use. She said nearly 150 American municipalities have already done so, to good effect.

"In Washington, D.C., a five percent charge on all single-use bags led to about a 60 percent reduction and in Los Angeles County in California, a ban on plastic bags and a 10 cent charge on paper bags led to a 95 percent reduction in single-bag use overall," said Romer.

Environmental activists and some New York City Council members are proposing a law to charge 10 cents for single-use plastic bags.

That is government overreach, said Mark Daniels of the American Progressive Bag Alliance, an industry trade group. He spoke with VOA via Skype.

"It's your personal responsibility as well. If you shop at a convenience store and buy a pack of gum and a Coke, it does not necessarily need a plastic bag. You can refuse that," said Daniels.

Jennie Romer counters that people usually don't refuse a free convenience.

"But with a 10 cent charge on bags, customers are much more likely to stop and think about whether they need a bag or not. And that's really all that these laws are doing," said Romer.

**Mark Daniels said most people reuse plastic bags at home, and limiting the use of American made bags will cost jobs in the plastic bag manufacturing sector and recycling centers.**

**Environmental groups are racing to put an increasing number of plastic bag fee proposals on ballots and before city and state legislators, as the federal government reports a dramatic rise in the number of plastic bags Americans use each year.**

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<http://www.voanews.com/content/big-apple-weighs-fees-on-single-use-plastic-bags/1890175.html>



The New York Times

May 18, 2013

## Is It Time to Bag the Plastic?

By ELISABETH ROSENTHAL

IN my New York City apartment, the kitchen drawers, the coat closet, even the wine rack are overflowing with a type of waste that is rapidly disappearing elsewhere — the used plastic shopping bag.

Many countries and a handful of American cities have more or less done away with this supposed convenience item, by discouraging its use through plastic-bag taxes at checkout counters or outright bans. Walk down the streets of Dublin or Seattle or San Francisco and there is barely a bag in sight. Life continues.

“It didn’t take people very long to accommodate at all,” said Dick Lilly, manager for waste prevention in Seattle, where a plastic-bag ban took effect last summer. “Basically overnight those grocery and drugstore bags were gone.”

But in much of America we seem more addicted than ever. On a recent shopping trip to Target in Chicago for some dorm supplies while visiting my son, I emerged with what seemed to be more bags than socks or rolls of toilet paper (only a slight exaggeration). At my local supermarket, plastic bags are applied layer upon layer around purchases, like Russian nesting dolls.

“Plastic shopping bags are an enormous problem for New York City,” said Ron Gonen, the deputy commissioner of sanitation for recycling and waste reduction, noting that the city pays \$10 million annually to send 100,000 tons of plastic bags that are tossed in the general trash to landfills in South Carolina, Ohio and Pennsylvania. That, he points out, “is amazing to think of, because a plastic bag doesn’t weigh much at all.”

All across the country, plastic bags are the bane of recycling programs. When carelessly placed into recycling bins for general plastic — which they often are — the bags jam and damage expensive sorting machines, which cost huge amounts to repair.

“We have to get people to start carrying reusable bags,” Mr. Gonen said. “We’re going to do what we can to start moving the needle.”

“The question,” he continued, “is do we use a carrot or a stick to change behavior?”

So far New York has used carrots, to little effect. (More about that later.) Unfortunately, most experts believe it will take a stiff stick to break a habit as ingrained as this one is in the United States. (In many European countries, like France and Italy, the plastic bag thing never fully caught on.)

In my case, I know I should bring a cloth bag along for shopping trips. And I do — when I remember. But experience shows that even environmentally conscious people need prodding and incentives to change their behavior permanently.

Where they exist, bans and charges or taxes (when set high enough) have been extremely successful and often raise revenue for other environmental projects. Unfortunately, these tactics are deeply unpopular in most of the nation.

After Austin, Tex., passed a bag ban earlier this year and with Dallas considering one, State Representative Drew Springer, a Republican, introduced the Shopping Bag Freedom Act in the Legislature. That act essentially bans bag bans, protecting the right of merchants to provide bags of any material to customers.

Businesses often fight hard against plastic-bag laws. When in 2007, Seattle first tried to impose a fee of 20 cents for each plastic bag, the American Chemistry Council financed a popular referendum that voted down the “bag tax,” before it even took effect, Mr. Lilly said.

It took several more years for the city to regroup and impose its current ban. Plastic shopping bags are forbidden in stores, and though paper bags may be used, each one costs the shopper 5 cents. (There are exemptions, however: restaurants managed to secure one for takeout food, for example.)

A number of states are considering some form of statewide bans or taxes. And last month, Representative James P. Moran, Democrat of Virginia, introduced a bill to create a national 5-cent tax on all disposable plastic or paper bags provided by stores to customers. Some of the revenue would be used to create a Disposable Carryout Bag Trust Fund and to maintain national parks.

Actually, the idea of a bag tax may not seem so foreign to federal lawmakers: for the past three years, Washington has had its own 5-cent tax. Although bag use there dropped sharply, many experts feel that the charge should be even higher. In Ireland, for example, the bag tax is about 30 cents per bag.

By any measure, New Yorkers are laggards on the issue. In 2008, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg tried unsuccessfully to pass a bag tax of 6 cents. More recently, New York State has preferred to attack the problem with soft diplomacy. Since 2009, large stores throughout the state providing plastic bags have been required to take them back for recycling. But there is not much enforcement, Mr. Gonen said, and the program “hasn’t put a dent” in the numbers.

While the chain pharmacies and supermarkets in my neighborhood initially put out recycling bins for the bags, they have largely disappeared. Some stores will begrudgingly take back plastic at the sales counter — though I’ve seen the bags subsequently tossed in the trash. (Though plastic bags can be recycled, they must be separated from other forms of plastic.) The Bloomberg administration is also considering partnering with supermarkets to create incentive programs with shopping points awarded to those who bring reusable bags.

Frank Convery, an economist at University College, Dublin, who has studied the effects of Ireland's 10-year-old bag tax — the first in the world — is skeptical: "As regards the plastic bag issue, whatever is done has to be mandatory," he said. "The New York model is designed to fail."

Mr. Gonen said cities got a lot of complaints about plastic bags. So why wouldn't that inspire more of them to take action? It is another paradox of environmental politics — just as when New Yorkers show strong support for a bike-sharing plan but protest when bike-sharing racks appear on their sidewalk.

In a city where dog owners are forced to pick up their pets' waste and are precluded from smoking in parks, why is it so hard to get people to employ reusable bags for shopping?

*Elisabeth Rosenthal is a reporter on the environment and health for The New York Times.*

*This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:*

***Correction: May 26, 2013***

*A news analysis article last Sunday misstated the name of a trade association that has opposed efforts to tax plastic bags. It is the American Chemistry Council, not the American Chemical Council.*



## A pro-and-con look at the plastic shopping bag ban

MARCH 13, 2013 9:15 AM

About the writers: Editor's note: Jennifer Moody, the Albany Democrat-Herald's K-12 education reporter, is teaching a class on journalism this quarter at Oregon State University. As a class exercise, students wrote editorials. Today, we print two of them, each one taking a different position on Corvallis' controversial ban of some single-use plastic bags.

**Pro**

By MADDY DUTHIE

Plastic bag-ban fever continues to spread up and down the Interstate 5 corridor of the West Coast, and although many pros and cons exist, this ban is for the best.

From Seattle to Los Angeles, customers in various cities (now including Corvallis) now pay a fee per bag instead of using unlimited plastic or paper bags for their groceries. In Corvallis, consumers are charged 5 cents per bag to encourage the use of reusable cloth bags.

What environmentally savvy Pacific Northwest residents may not know is that bag bans (and ban attempts) exist all over the globe – on each inhabitable continent, according to

[plasticbagbanreport.com](http://plasticbagbanreport.com).

Banning the bag protects the environment from degradation — plastic bags are not biodegradable, and are found littered not only in landfills, but in rivers, ponds and oceans.

Oregon alone, according to environmental advocates cited by [plasticbagbanreport.com](http://plasticbagbanreport.com), uses 1.7 billion plastic bags yearly, resulting in environmental damage as a large amount of bags end up in the ocean. Even in landfills, the bags "will take up to 1,000 years to degrade," according to [RensselaerCounty.org](http://RensselaerCounty.org).

The plastic bag is only a few decades old, but it's estimated that 1 million bags per minute are used, building up to over 500 billion each year.

Many have argued with compelling evidence that banning, limiting and taxing plastic bag usage hurts jobs and businesses, and increases use of paper bags, which increases tree consumption.

However, the problems plastic bags pose for our society and societies across the globe are larger than their resulting environmental degradation.

Unlimited use of unsustainable, disposable bags encourages consumerist behavior. We want exactly what we want, when we want it, and in a consumerist First World country, many don't see a disadvantage to that.

We have access to riches beyond comprehension; this enables us to complain about any and every inconvenience, and our focus on consuming blinds us to the global impact of our overconsumption. We are able to live with these blinders that prevent us from learning how this behavior might affect poverty around the globe.

Whether you agree our behavior impacts Third World and developing countries, global consumption of oil used to produce plastic bag doesn't do favors for any nation, as oil is a limited resource.

RensselaerCounty.org estimates the United States' paper and plastic bag usage consumes at least 14 million trees and 12 million barrels of oil each year.

The plastic bag also has economic costs some consumers don't consider. According to RensselaerCounty.org, "free" bags cost retailers in the United States \$4 billion, which are accounted for in the costs of retail goods.

The plastic bag ban in Corvallis includes an option for retailers to charge 5 cents for paper bags, which encourages long-term change in behavior. This motivation for long-term behavioral change is a way for an entire society to realize habits of overconsumption.

Instead of relying on "free" unlimited, disposable bags to carry their groceries, consumers will be motivated to reuse bags when facing a fee of 5 cents per paper bag. Eventually, the hope is that most consumers will become more responsible.

There have been astounding results from various bag bans and taxes — not only in Oregon, but across the globe. Ireland, Bangladesh, Mexico City, Burma, at least six major cities in India, and a few cities in England have all made efforts to reduce plastic bag usage.

The results in Ireland, which issued a plastic bag fee in 2002, lowered consumption by 94 percent within the first year, according to reuseit.com.

A law against plastic bags might not seem like an effective approach to guiding society away from unhealthy overconsumption of resources, but in my book, it's worth a shot.

## Con

By MARY JOHNSON

The recent "Single-Use Plastic Carryout Bags" ordinance in Corvallis has had many residents in the community up in arms. They have a legitimate reason to be angry.

According to the city of Corvallis, plastic bags provided at a time other than checkout are allowed. These include plastic bags used for meat, produce or bulk items. Plastic bags for restaurant takeout foods are also allowed. It is weird that the ordinance keeps some plastic when it is banned everywhere else.

According to the city of Corvallis, if a retailer is found to be in violation of the ordinance, a minimum fine of \$200 will be imposed for each offense. I find it difficult to figure out how the city is going to patrol that.

Also, reusable bags can become dangerous. Germs and bacteria can stay in the bag, and a person is at risk of getting sick.

The bag ban has now been in effect for more than two months, and it has continued to be difficult for people to adjust to the ban.

Many customers simply forget to bring their bag into the store, so they are going to continue to get charged 5 cents each time they go to the grocery store.

Banning plastic bags in one city is not going to really make a huge impact. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, more than 380 billion plastic bags are used in the United States every year.

It is not the plastic bags that should be targeted: it is the amount of packaging companies use to wrap their products.

Some plastic bags are even recyclable, so they are not as bad for the environment as people think. The American Chemistry Council says that plastic bags can be made into dozens of useful new products, such as building and construction products, low-maintenance fencing and decking, and new bags.

Paper bags are not necessarily the best for the environment either. Comparably, roughly 15,100 barrels of oil are used to produce and transport 100 million paper bags, according to policy analyst Skaidra Smith-Heisters for Reason's New Environmentalism program.

The clean air council also brings up the point that every year, Americans throw away enough paper and plastic cups, forks and spoons to circle the equator 300 times. They also note that the average American uses about the equivalent of one 100-foot-tall Douglas fir tree in paper and wood products each year.

This is also a financial issue. Many business owners buy plastic bags two to three years in advance. Since the ordinance has now banned the plastic bags, they all have to go to waste. This is not fair for these business owners.

Corvallis' single-use plastic bag ordinance is inconvenient to residents of the Corvallis community and store owners. Too many people forget to take their reusable bags into the store, and it is an easy way to get bacteria from the bag into the food that we eat. The fee for not following this ordinance is too expensive and inconvenient for these small business owners.