

Bagging Big Plastic “Facts”

Learn the truth about the plastic bag ban.



Bagtheban.com shares misinformation claiming the ban would actually hurt the environment. However, Big Plastic’s claims on recycling, reusing, economic and environmental impact can be undermined by research (data!). See the truth to each of Big Plastic’s claims below.

Environment

BIG PLASTIC’S CLAIM: Plastic bags are a more environmentally-friendly option at the checkout than alternatives like paper and so-called “reusable” bags.

TRUTH: Plastic bags are not the most environmentally friendly option at the checkout since they are not biodegradable or compostable at all! A huge problem with plastic bags, plastic bottles and other plastic materials is that they can take decades or centuries to degrade. Essentially, they’re with us in the environment forever. Some plastics manufacturers claim their products are biodegradable, but testing and real world experience has yet to bear this out.

With 5.25 trillion pieces of plastic floating in our ocean, plastic marine litter is one of the most pervasive and menacing problems affecting the marine environment. Plastic doesn’t biodegrade. It breaks down into smaller pieces, but never goes away. Marine animals eat it and become sick or die. It also entangles and injures them, making it difficult to swim or fly. Unknown numbers of animals die this way each year, and the toxins are beginning to make their way into our food stream.¹

Recycling

BIG PLASTIC’S CLAIM: The rate of plastic bag recycling increases each year with help from America’s plastic bag manufacturing and recycling industry and thousands of recycling drop-off locations across the country.

TRUTH: Sadly, plastic bag recycling rates are not increases. And even if they did, there is just so many plastic bags in circulation that recycling is not a viable solution. In 2010 about 690,000 tons of waste HDPE plastic “bags, sacks and wraps” were generated in the United States, but only 4.3% of this total was recycled.² In California alone, nearly 13 billion are used annually—that’s almost 400 bags per second—and the state spends approximately \$25 million each year to send plastic bags to landfills, and another \$8.5 million to remove littered bags from streets.³

Jobs and Economy

BIG PLASTIC'S CLAIM: Bag bans and taxes threaten American jobs, force families to spend more at the checkout and cause local business to lose customers and money.

TRUTH: There is no evidence that bag bans threaten jobs or local businesses to lose customers and money.⁴ A statewide ban will create a level playing field for businesses with bans in the 147 California cities and counties—nearly 40% of the state.

Moreover, even though industry cites to small, non-scientific surveys in Seattle⁵ and Los Angeles County,⁶ these surveys do not represent the experience of dozens of local bag bans that have been in place since the mid 2000s (the low response rates of these industry surveys invalidate claims that negative business impacts are widely occurring).

Health

BIG PLASTIC'S CLAIM: “Reusable” bags that haven’t been washed can harbor food-borne bacteria that may be harmful to your family’s health.

TRUTH: Common sense and good hygiene by cleaning a reusable bag after carrying meat or fish will protect one’s family from food-borne bacteria. But there has been no evidence that reusable bags make you sick. Scare tactics should not discourage people from using reusable bags.

Reusing

BIG PLASTIC'S CLAIM: Nearly 90 percent of Americans reuse plastic bags. Are you one of them?

TRUTH: While many people reuse plastic bags for household purposes, such as trash can liners, these bags still enter the waste stream, storm sewer systems, and waterways leading to the ocean. Plastic bags also end up in landfills and materials recovery facilities, where they cause significant problems for waste management companies by damaging equipment and causing costly delays.⁷

1. <http://www.oceanconservancy.org/our-work/marine-debris/threat-rank-report/2016-threat-rank-report.pdf>

2. <http://ladpw.org/epd/pdf/PlasticBagReport.pdf>

3. <http://www.cawrecycles.org/the-problem-of-plastic-bags> and <http://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/publiced/holidays/ReusableBags.htm>

4. See studies cited in the “Studies - Government & Non-Profit Reports” section of www.plasticbaglaws.com

5. CAW. Claims of Increased Shoplifting Due to Bag Ban Overblown. March 1, 2013.

<http://www.cawrecycles.org/recycling-news/1976>

6. CAW. Bogus Study Released on Bag Ban Impacts to Stores. August 17, 2012.

<http://www.cawrecycles.org/recycling-news/2080>

7. CalRecycle. 2009 Statewide Recycling Rate for Plastic Carryout Bags.

<http://calrecycle.ca.gov/plastics/atstore/AnnualRate/2009Rate.htm>



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