Save California’s Plastic Bag Ban

YES on Prop 67 Activist Action Guide

ISSUE SUMMARY

Plastic pollution plagues our beaches, inland waterways, parks and neighborhoods—and one of the worst offenders is the single-use plastic bag. Plastic bags are a serious sustainability problem. Designed for only minutes of use, and due to their lightweight nature, single-use plastic bags easily become litter and don’t degrade in the natural environment. It’s estimated we use over 13 billion plastic bags each year in California.1 From an economic perspective, they are costly to clean-up with EPA estimating West Coast communities spend over a half billion dollars each year to clean up plastic pollution, much of which is comprised of plastic bags.2 Environmentally, they threaten wildlife—over 663 species of ocean life have ingested or become entangled in plastic pollution.3 And, societally, they blight our neighborhoods and beaches.

California leads the nation on plastic pollution prevention laws, from the landmark statewide plastic bag ban signed into law in 2014 to adopting the first-ever statewide trash policy in 2015 calling for a zero trash goal for all of California’s waterways. But, unfortunately, we are up against some serious opposition. Big plastic has spent millions of dollars challenging the statewide plastic bag ban, which will now appear on the ballot in November 2016. Hopefully voters stand up to Big Plastic by making their voices heard in November to uphold our groundbreaking single-use plastic bag law.

GOAL/OUTCOME

Generate public awareness about impacts of single-use plastic bags and compel California residents to vote YES on November 8, 2016 to uphold CA’s plastic bag ban.

STRATEGY

• Coordinated grassroots outreach by NGOs and community groups throughout SoCal.
• Identify community leaders and partners to mobilize support.
• Conduct direct voter outreach to secure commitments to vote yes on bag initiative.
• Use consistent messaging to general public through events and media.
• Leverage communities that already have bag bans, as they are more prone to support the initiative.
SAMPLE ACTIVIST ACTIONS

• **Build a Grassroots Activist Network:** The key to getting people out to vote is educating thousands of people one-on-one, getting them commit to voting yes, getting their contact info, and then following up several times through phone, text, and email to remind them to vote and make sure they know how. Build network through tabling events (Earth Month!), educational events, social media, farmers markets, beach cleanups, etc.

• **Conduct Community-based Outreach:** Engage existing community, social justice, political, cultural and educational organizations in the effort and get them to reach out to their members. Offer to give group presentations on the plastic bag ban.

• **Build Favorable Media:** Engage local media in events, schedule press conferences around beach cleanups, post regularly on social media, etc. Write letters to the editor of local papers.

• **Secure Leadership, Government, and Business Endorsements:** Influence people to vote by getting some of the most influential people and opinion leaders in our local communities to sign on in support—local elected officials, student government, professors, and business leaders. Set up meetings with city council members, practice making asks, etc. http://www.cawrecycles.org/local/campaigncommitments/?rq=commitment

• **Plan Creative Educational Events and Rallies:** Get voters excited about the bag ban by holding fun, educational events (Coastal Cleanup Day, rallies, pop-up parties, flash mobs, etc.) Be creative and collaborative with campaign coalition partners. And, make sure to invite local media and bloggers, and post pics of fun events on social media.

• **Capitalize on Education at Beach Cleanups:** Hold beach clean ups at beaches and inland communities to showcase the problem of plastic bags in our environment. You can do two beach clean ups to compare—one in a city that has banned bags, one is a city that hasn’t. This is also a great place to get pledges to vote yes, and build your network of contacts (emails and cell phone numbers) for people that pledge to vote yes.

• **Remind People to Vote:** Use social media and execute phone banking to the sign-ups solicited while building the grassroots activist network (or partner with a leading NGO), canvass neighborhoods and grocery stores to encourage people to get out to vote. YES ON PROP 67!

1. 13 billion plastic bags in CA facts: http://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/publiced/holidays/ReusableBags.htm