



L.A. SETS BAD PRECEDENT WITH PLASTIC BAG LAW
Split 3-2, Board of Supervisors caves to industry lobby and enacts weakened measure

Los Angeles, CA (Tuesday, January 22, 2008) -- Marking a significant blow to the Southland environment and economy, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors today approved a half-hearted measure to curb plastic shopping bag use in the Southland.

Despite strong support from Supervisors Zev Yaroslavsky and Gloria Molina, a majority of the board ignored its staff recommendation to consider a stronger measure that would ban plastic bags in unincorporated areas if aggressive recycling targets were not met.

Following 11th hour lobbying efforts by associations representing grocers and bag manufacturers, Supervisor Yvonne Burke voted to support an amendment by Supervisors Mike Antonovich and Don Knabe that delayed implementation of a possible ban until 2010. It also reduced recycling requirements for local retailers that hand out single-use plastic bags.

After months of good-faith negotiations with the board, its staff and various stakeholders, Heal the Bay and other environmental groups last week had agreed to a compromise measure that would impose tighter deadlines and more aggressive triggers of a ban.

“Today, the board voted to protect the interests of the polluters, not the citizens they are sworn to protect,” said Mark Gold, president of Heal the Bay. “It’s a sad day when we have to look to China for environmental leadership and resolve.”

The Chinese government last week adopted an outright ban on the distribution of plastic shopping bags, citing the environmental and economic damage caused by the proliferation of one-use bags. More than two dozen nations and metropolitan areas have enacted similar bans, including San Francisco and Paris.

Separately, the Whole Foods market chain announced today that it would be phasing out all plastic bags in its North American stores by May. The IKEA home furnishings chain also has moved to eliminate plastic bags at its stores.

Heal the Bay remains steadfast in its belief that an outright ban is the most effective way to protect marine life, reduce blight and save taxpayer dollars. Voluntary and industry-overseen recycling programs that form the basis of the board-approved measure simply do not work. The state of California spends more than \$25 million annually to collect and dispose of plastic shopping bags.

“In Los Angeles County alone we use 6 billion bags a year, so even if 30% are recycled that leaves more than 4 billion bags littering our public places and oceans,” said Gold. “That’s simply not acceptable.”

Moving forward, Heal the Bay is continuing to actively work with progressive cities in the county and state to develop more decisive and measureable legislation than that adopted by the board today.

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