



CALIF. POISED TO ENACT NATION'S TOUGHEST BAG LAW

Heal the Bay, L.A. County urge Assembly to impose fees on plastic bags statewide

SACRAMENTO, CA (April 10, 2008) – Leading environmental group Heal the Bay has joined forces with the County of Los Angeles to endorse AB 2829, a bill that would impose a mandatory fee on the distribution of single-use plastic shopping bags at all large grocery stores and pharmacies statewide.

The bill, authored by Assemblymember Mike Davis (D-Los Angeles), would mark the most aggressive action by any state legislature to curb the proliferation of plastic bags and limit their negative impacts on the marine environment, local economies and quality of life for millions of citizens.

In a bid to encourage consumers to bring their own reusable bags, store owners would be required to charge 25 cents for each plastic bag requested by shoppers. Funds raised would be directed back to local governments on a per-capita basis for litter prevention and reduction efforts.

Members of the Assembly's Natural Resource Committee are scheduled to vote on the measure Monday. The bill has the support of a wide range of environmental, business and government groups.

"This precedent-setting bill can propel California once again to the forefront of progressive environmental public policy," said Mark Gold, president of Heal the Bay. "Along with a ban, a fee-based proposal is the most effective way to help rid our state of its addiction to wasteful, single-use packaging."

Californians use more than 19 billion disposable plastic shopping bags each year, with taxpayers spending more than \$25 million to collect and dispose of them. While the bags are recyclable, less than 5% of them are recycled. The vast majority wind up in dwindling landfill or clogging our watersheds and blighting our public spaces.

AB 2829 amends a state law that currently forbids municipalities from imposing carryout bag fees, restoring local government's authority to enact measures that have been shown to reduce pollution. Ireland, for example, has reduced use of plastic bags by 90% since 2002 after imposing mandatory fees.

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, hamstrung legally to charge fees, passed a measure this year that set recycling targets for retailers that distribute plastic bags. The county is a sponsor of AB 2829.

"The distribution of plastic bags has created a hidden cost on residents," said L.A. County Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke. "They not only pay for plastic bags in the price of their commodities, but their tax dollars fund litter prevention and abatement efforts. It is our poorest communities that are most negatively impacted by the high amount of plastic bag blight."

The Assembly committee is mulling a separate plastic-bag measure sponsored by Assemblyman Lloyd Levine (D-Van Nuys). Heal the Bay and the County of Los Angeles oppose that bill because it relies on unrealistic recycling thresholds and delays action until 2011.

Heal the Bay is a nonprofit environmental organization dedicated to making Southern California coastal waters and watersheds, including Santa Monica Bay, safe, healthy and clean for people and aquatic life.

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