



## **STATE BAN ON PLASTIC BAGS DIES IN CALIF. SENATE**

*Battling cynical ad blitz, Heal the Bay vows to enact measures at local level*

SANTA MONICA, CA (Wednesday, September 1, 2010) – Ignoring a growing statewide groundswell to curb California’s plastic pollution plague, the state Senate failed last night to approve a landmark bill that would have barred the distribution of single-use plastic shopping bags at grocery stores, convenience stores and pharmacies statewide.

Despite widespread support by a broad coalition of environmental, local government, union and business groups, AB 1998 failed to collect sufficient votes in the Senate. The deep-pocketed American Chemistry Council spent millions on a misleading, last-minute lobbying and advertising campaign designed to blunt growing popular sentiment for curbs on plastic trash.

Underscoring the common-sense measure’s appeal, the state Assembly had already approved the bill and Republican Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger had indicated his support for the measure, which sought to end the environmental and fiscal waste created by Californians’ use of 19 billion single-use plastic shopping bags each year.

Environmental group Heal the Bay, which sponsored AB 1988, has led the legislative fight to enact a bag ban for more than five years as part of its ongoing efforts to tackle plastic pollution. The organization will now turn its efforts to enacting single-use bag bans at the local level.

Five California cities have adopted ordinances banning plastic single-use bags, including San Francisco and Malibu. Because of the state’s failure to enact a uniform policy, the city and county of Los Angeles will now begin pursuing bans in their jurisdictions. At least 20 more are considering banning plastic bags in the near future.

“The polluters won a battle in the state Senate, but we will win the war against the proliferation of single-use plastics in California,” said Mark Gold, president of Heal the Bay. “We look forward to working with enlightened and progressive leaders on the local level to end the environmental and fiscal waste caused by plastic bags.”

California municipalities spend nearly \$25 million each year just to collect and dispose of plastic bag waste. Less than 5% of plastic grocery bags are recycled each year statewide, so the remainder clogs precious landfill, litters public spaces and harms animal life when the bags infiltrate waterways.

AB 1998 also had the crucial backing of the California Grocers Assn., the California Retailers Assn. and the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW), whose members have called for a uniform and environmentally sound single-use bag policy statewide.

Heavy-duty reusable bags are convenient, environmentally friendly alternatives that have been embraced by millions around the world.



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**About Heal the Bay**

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. We use research, education, community action and advocacy to pursue our mission.