



Alaska Association of Student Governments

Resolution #11

Reducing Plastic Bags in the City and Borough of Juneau, Alaska

Submitted by: Forrest Davis

Submitted: April 10, 2019

Be it resolved by the Alaska Association of Student Governments that:

- 1. Whereas;** up to 80 percent of ocean plastic pollution enters the ocean from land;¹
- 2. Whereas;** at least 267 different species have been affected by plastic pollution in the ocean and 100,000 marine animals are killed by plastic bags annually.¹ Animals often mistake plastic bags for food or nest-building materials, which leads to poisoning, choking, entanglement, and blocked intestines—all of which can result in death;³
- 3. Whereas;** due to their light weight, plastic bags can easily blow out of trash receptacles and even landfills. They then clog waterways, damage agricultural land, and provide ideal breeding grounds for mosquitoes;³
- 4. Whereas;** Americans use 100 billion plastic bags a year, which require 12 million barrels of oil to manufacture;¹
- 5. Whereas;** it takes 500+ years for a plastic bag to degrade in a landfill. The bags do not break down completely but instead photo-degrade, becoming microplastics that absorb toxins and continue to pollute the environment;¹

6. Whereas; the best way to measure a product's environmental impact is through a Life Cycle Assessment (LCA). LCA gives a full picture of a bag's impact through every stage of its existence:

- (a) Birth: A bag is born when it is manufactured. Impacts of bag manufacturing include energy use for processing, as well as the use of raw materials like petroleum for plastic bags and trees for paper bags. One must consider the impact of extracting the raw materials, too, and the resources used for transportation.⁵
- (b) Life: The life of a bag is the useful life of typical service. For traditional plastic bags, an average useful life is just twelve minutes. Canvas bags are designed to be used once a week for a year, replacing one plastic bag a week, or 50 bags a year. At least one canvas bag is designed for 2-3 years of weekly usage, replacing up to 1000 plastic bags.⁵
- (c) Death: Plastic bag disposal not only has financial costs but also degrades our waterways and landscapes. Plastic bags stuff our landfills and, as they are often littered, require expensive clean up. Thin disposable plastic bags contribute to all these problems, but even biodegradable bags (including bio-plastic and paper bags) have end-of-life impacts. About 80% of paper bags are not recycled, and end up as garbage in a landfill, where their impact is similar to other plastic bags. Even recycling has its impacts: environmental, economic, and transportation of recycled materials can be significant if the recycling materials are sold on the world market for materials. Recycling also uses energy and chemicals to sort and break down post-consumer waste and make it ready for manufacturing again;⁵

7. Whereas; several cities and towns in Alaska have already implemented plastic bag bans; including Palmer, Wasilla, Bethel, Soldotna, Hooper Bay, Kodiak, and Unalaska;⁴

8. Whereas; California became the first state to enact legislation imposing a statewide ban on single-use plastic bags at large retail stores;²

9. Whereas; in the United States of America, other territories, states, and cities that have banned, taxed, or set up a special recycling program for disposable bags include: Hawai'i, the District of Columbia, Seattle, Maine, New York, Rhode Island, and Puerto Rico;³

Therefore, be it resolved by the Alaska Association of Student Governments supports that the City and Borough of Juneau reduce plastic bag use through a five (5) year plan.

The steps of this 5 year plan are as follows:

- 1. The City and Borough of Juneau would encourage establishments to provide customers with environmentally-friendly carryout bags.
- 2. The City and Borough of Juneau would purchase compostable bags and sell the bags to businesses in the City and Borough of Juneau at half price.

3. The City and Borough of Juneau would establish drop-off sites at major businesses for the compostable bags.
4. The City and Borough of Juneau would recognize businesses that participate in purchasing and only using eco-friendly bags as "green packaging stores" by awarding these businesses plaques or signs.
5. The City and Borough of Juneau would purchase non-woven polypropylene (NWPP) bags with the words: Save the Landfill. The City and Borough of Juneau would sell these NWPP bags to customers by working with stores, organizations, schools, and businesses.
6. Five years after the passage of this resolution, the City and Borough of Juneau would prohibit all establishments in borough limits from providing single-use plastic disposable shopping bags for the purpose of carrying away goods from the point of sale. Exemptions for this ban would include:
 - (a) Bags used in stores for bulk items or to protect meat and frozen foods.
 - (b) Bags sold in packages containing multiple bags intended for use as garbage bags or to contain pet waste or yard waste.
7. Once the ban is in place, The City and Borough of Juneau would impose the following penalties for establishments in violation of the policy: a warning for the first offense, \$100 fine for the second offense, and \$300 fine for the third offense.

Action statement: This resolution, if approved by the General Assembly of AASG, will be sent to the following:

City and Borough of Juneau Assembly at BoroughAssembly@juneau.org

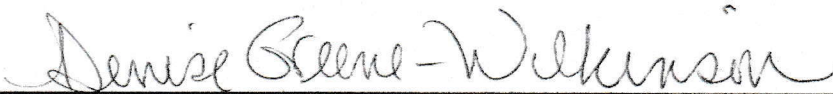
Sources:

1. "10 Facts About Single-use Plastic Bags - Center for Biological Diversity." https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/population_and_sustainability/sustainability/plastic_bag_facts.html. Accessed 17 Nov. 2018.
2. "State Plastic and Paper Bag Legislation." <http://www.ncsl.org/research/environment-and-natural-resources/plastic-bag-legislation.aspx>. Accessed 17 Nov. 2018.
3. "Which Countries Have Banned Plastic Bags? | Study.com." <https://study.com/blog/which-countries-have-banned-plastic-bags.html>. Accessed 24 Dec. 2018.
4. "Bag Laws - Bag Legislation in Alaska." <http://www.baglaws.com/legislation.php?state=Alaska>. Accessed 30 Jan. 2019.
5. "Measuring Plastic Bag Impacts | 1 Bag at a Time." <https://1bagatatime.com/learn/measuring-plastic-bag-impacts/>. Accessed 6 Mar. 2019.

Passed unanimously by the 2019 Spring Conference GA at Bethel Regional High School

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kyle Hasse', written above a horizontal line.

AASG Vice President, Kyle Hasse

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Denise Greene-Wilkinson', written above a horizontal line.

AASG Executive Director, Denise Greene-Wilkinson