



OPPOSES

S. 6717 (Senate Rules Committee)

AN ACT to amend the county law, in relation to prohibiting the imposition of any tax, fee or local charge on carry out merchandise bags in Suffolk county

The New York League of Conservation Voters strongly opposes S. 6717 (Senate Rules Committee) and urges the legislature to reject this legislation. This bill would preempt Local Law 27-2016 of Suffolk County to reduce the use of carryout bags in retail sales. Preemption of this local law will prolong the county's exposure to pollution as well as the economic hardship to the taxpayers who have to pay for the disposal of and the damage caused by this form of preventable litter.

In contemplating this local law, the Suffolk County Legislature considered the following facts:

- Data released by the United States Environmental Protection Agency shows that between 500 billion and 1 trillion plastic bags are consumed worldwide each year and most plastic bags do not biodegrade; over time, the bags break down into smaller, more toxic petro-polymers which eventually contaminate soils and waterways.
- It is estimated that plastic bags account for over 10% of debris that washes up on our nation's coastlines and that plastic bags can have a devastating effect on wildlife; birds can become entangled in the bags and different species of sea life can die from ingesting plastic bags which they mistake for food.
- Plastic shopping bags are made from polyethylene, a thermoplastic made from oil and accordingly, reducing the use of plastic bags will decrease our dependence on fossil fuels. Only, 5 to 7 percent of plastic bags are recycled, in part due to the fact that it costs more to recycle a bag than to produce a new one.
- Furthermore, Americans consume more than ten billion paper bags each year and fourteen million trees are cut down yearly for the manufacturing of paper. Paper production requires large amounts of water, energy, and chemicals and can emit toxic and hazardous chemicals into the air and water and the nation's paper industry generates more than twelve million tons of solid waste every year.

Because the damage done by single use bags greatly outweighs the benefits, cities and countries around the world have enacted similar laws to control this form of pollution.

NYLCV is strongly opposed to the preemption of local action to protect the environment when the state and federal governments fail to act and urges the legislature to reject this bill.

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