

Plastic Bags: Ban Or No Ban?

“Every year, around 500 billion plastic bags are used worldwide” (Jacobsen). That is a lot of plastic bags! Especially since plastic bags are so bad for the environment. Plastic bags should be banned, and here’s why.

First, even though plastic bags *can* be recycled, do they actually *get* recycled? The answer is usually not. Plastic bags are difficult to recycle, they are light so they can fly away and get stuck in machinery, because of this, many cities don’t offer curbside recycling for plastic bags. Since curbside recycling isn’t offered, many plastic bags end up as litter or in landfills. If plastic bags are banned then people will use fewer plastic bags, which will mean there will be fewer plastic bags that need to be recycled, which will mean there will be fewer plastic bags that don’t actually get recycled and end up as litter. Like the National Geographic article, “Sustainable Shopping-Which Bag Is Best?” says, “Plastic bags that become litter endanger many facets of the environment.” Less plastic bag litter will mean a safer and healthier environment.

Another reason to ban plastic bags is they are harmful to the environment. Plastic bags take a very long time to break down, and when they do they break down into toxic microplastic particles. These particles can contaminate food and water, and scientists have found them everywhere. But even before they break down into toxic particles plastic bags can be dangerous. “Animals and sea creatures are hurt and killed every day by discarded plastic bags. . .m mistaking plastic bags for food is commonplace amongst marine animals. Plastic clogs their intestines and leads to slow starvation. Others become entangled in plastic bags and drown.” (Jacobsen) Plastic bags can be very dangerous, and, since so many plastic bags end up as litter or in landfills where

they can break down into harmful microplastics or get blown into the ocean, many more animals will die from them.

Some people may argue that banning plastic bags would just cause people to use paper bags instead, which are arguably worse for the environment. However, there is also a way to discourage people from paper bags and other single-use bags. A tax on all single-use bags could be imposed. Bans on single-use bags have been put into place in other cities and proved effective. As stated in an article by Zeitlin, “Very small financial incentives can lead to big behavioral changes.” Implementing a ban on plastic bags and a tax on single-use bags can greatly encourage people to use reusable bags. People also might point out that plastic bags are the most environmentally friendly to produce, and that reusable bags take a lot of energy and resources. But while this is true for some reusable bags there are better options. For example, nonwoven polypropylene bags only need to be reused about 11 times for their environmental impact to be even out. That means by about your 12th or 13th trip to the grocery store with that bag you’ll already be doing better than if you were using a plastic bag, and will have saved 12 or 13 plastic bags in the process!

In conclusion, there are valid arguments for both sides of the debate, on whether to ban plastic bags. But the best option seems to be to ban plastic bags and create a tax on single-use bags, and here I’ve explained just a few of the numerous reasons why.

Work Cited

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