



**American
Forest & Paper
Association**

Not speaking

**AF&PA Statement in Opposition to
Connecticut S.B. 58
Joint Committee on Environment**

February 9, 2011

The American Forest & Paper Association (AF&PA) appreciates the opportunity to share our perspective on S.B. 58, legislation that would impose a 5 cent fee on paper and plastic carryout bags.

AF&PA is the national trade association of the forest products industry, representing pulp, paper, packaging and wood products manufacturers, and forest landowners. Our companies make products essential for everyday life from renewable and recyclable resources that sustain the environment. The forest products industry accounts for approximately 5 percent of the total U.S. manufacturing GDP, putting it on par with the automotive and plastics industries. Industry companies produce \$175 billion in products annually and employ nearly 900,000 people earning \$50 billion in annual payroll. The industry is among the top 10 manufacturing sector employers in 47 states. In Connecticut, the industry employs nearly 6,000 people with an annual payroll around 370 million dollars.

We feel strongly that imposing a 5 cent tax on paper bags is unwarranted. The paper bag is a recycling success story. Many paper bags contain more than 30 percent recycled material, and in some cases, retailers use paper bags made of 100 percent recycled paper. Not only are paper bags made from recycled paper, they are highly recycled themselves and are a fixture in community recycling programs throughout Connecticut. In fact, Connecticut residents frequently use paper bags as their containers when recycling other paper products such as newspapers, magazines, envelopes, and printer paper. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the paper bag boasts a national recycling rate of more than 36 percent.

Thanks to industry leadership and tireless efforts of millions of Americans who recycle paper at home, work, and school every day, national paper recovery has reached record levels. The paper industry had set a 60 percent recovery goal for 2012; however, in 2009, 63.4 percent of the paper consumed in the U.S. was recovered for recycling – 3 years ahead of schedule. The industry is currently preparing new sustainability goals and setting even higher recovery rate goals.

The paper bag is also compostable as evidenced by the fact that paper bags are used throughout metropolitan areas in Connecticut for municipal leaf mulching programs. Paper bags are made from a natural fiber, so they are biodegradable, making them ideal for composting applications.

The legislation as currently drafted would have little, if any, effect on current retailer or consumer behavior. Retailers typically default to the use of plastic bags because one plastic

carryout bag is cheaper on a per-bag comparison, despite the fact that a single paper carryout bag can accommodate more items. If this bill were enacted, it is likely that plastics would continue to be the default for customers.

The environmental preference of paper is intuitive. The paper bag is made from a renewable resource – managed forests – that provides habitat for animals and removes large amounts of carbon dioxide from air we breathe. In its stewardship of these lands, the U.S. forest products industry is responsible for the planting of more than four million new trees each day. AF&PA, along with the entire paper manufacturing and recycling community, would be happy to assist the State of Connecticut in increasing its recycling efforts.

AF&PA respectfully requests that paper be removed from the purview of this legislation. Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to working with the committee as it continues its dialogue on this important issue.