



Connecticut Chapter
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Martin Mador, Legislative Chair

Environment Committee
February 4, 2015

Testimony In Support of

SB 349 An Act Concerning Single-use Carryout Plastic and
Paper Bags and the Use of Reusable Bags
HB 6033 An Act Concerning the Inclusion of Juices, Teas and
Sports Drinks under Connecticut's Bottle Bill
SB 347 An Act Concerning the Percentage of State and Federal Funds
That May Be Used to Purchase Open Space under the Open Space and Watershed Land
Acquisition Program

I am Martin Mador, 130 Highland Ave., Hamden, CT 06518. I am the volunteer Legislative Chair for the Connecticut Chapter of the Sierra Club. I hold a Masters of Environmental Management degree from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.

Effective strategies for dealing with solid waste is an important part of our environmental agenda. Ever seen the movie Wall-e? If so, you understand why. In this 2008 delightful Pixar animated movie, accumulated trash has driven humans off the planet.

We need to consider source reduction: reducing packaging and other materials which are destined to become waste. We must ensure we use appropriate materials in appropriate quantity with effective disposal methods available.

We need to establish effective post-consumer programs to collect and appropriately dispose of waste so that it does not permeate our environment. Anyone who has participated in a river cleanup understands this. Do it well and thoroughly. But expect to be back again in a year. Anyone who has noticed the detritus littering the sides of our roads and highways also understands.

The government has an important role to play here. Market forces have proven not effective in addressing the problems of pollution.

We have established a praiseworthy track record for Extended Producer Responsibility programs. Charge a tiny bit more at retail. Have the manufacturers use it for a program to takeback the product when the consumer is done with it. Electronics, paint, mattresses, and now tires coming to you this session. Next year, perhaps small batteries and carpets.

We need to address the problems on the consumer end. For toxics, once we cross the Precautionary Principle threshold of concern, we must ban them. For things which are not toxic, we can ban them, or, perhaps even better, we can give the public a financial incentive to do the right thing on their own.

Fifty years of addressing environmental contamination have conclusively shown us that the costs of pollution must be internalized. Embed the cost of remediation, whatever that might be, in the cost of the product to the consumer. Do not simply ask society to cover the costs after use.

That is actually the market strategy which works.

SB 349 is an effective mix of financial incentives leading eventually to a ban on retail bags. Appropriately, it covers both plastic and paper. Discarded plastic single use bags are now ubiquitous in the environment. While paper bags may decompose, their manufacture presents problems equally significant. Governments around the world are starting to take action. With our demonstrated regard for the environment, Connecticut must now join them.

SB 349 has three phases. 2 years with a minimum 10 cent charge on single use bags, 2 years with a minimum 25 cents allowing only recyclable, compostable or recycled bags, and finally a ban on all bags not considered reusable. The gradual voluntary switch to reusable bags we have seen over the past few years could be considered a preliminary phase.

The Sierra Club offers a few comments on SB 349 as presented:

- Perhaps accelerate the phase in by requiring a 2nd look at effectiveness in a year or two.
- All collected funds stay with the retailer. We suggest a portion go to the state to help finance environmental programs.
- Stores now cover 100% of the cost of obtaining the bags. So any income puts them ahead. At the time of a ban, those expenses evaporate completely.
- We are concerned the educational programs devised by the retailers will range from excellent to abysmal to non-existent. Would the town really monitor this?
- We applaud the consideration for customers on state aid.
- We are skeptical that the towns will impose penalties on their stores, even if they get to keep the funds. The effort to monitor retail compliance would be significant, if not impossible.
- The applicability of “this subsection” in lines 222-223 is not clear.

SB349 is a robust, well thought out, prescription for controlling single use bags. The Sierra Club endorses.

HB6033 is the latest in a progression of bottle bills. Putting a redemption value on these containers provides an incentive for collection and proper recycling. Although single stream recycling has helped with collection of household containers, it has no effect on roadside discards and public venues such as sporting events.

We started decades ago with a deposit only on carbonated beverages. That apparently was a compromise to get at least some bill passed. Then we extended this to water containers a few years ago. This year, we continue with expansion to juices, teas, and sports drinks.

The Sierra Club endorses.

SB 347 imposes an arbitrary cap on government funds used for the purchase of open space. As we are far from our goal of 21% preserved, it is important that this cap be removed.

The Sierra Club also endorses this bill.