

I support S.B. No. 229 (COMM) AN ACT PROHIBITING THE USE OF STYROFOAM TRAYS IN CONNECTICUT SCHOOLS, **and**

H.B. No. 5384 (COMM) AN ACT REQUIRING THE ELIMINATION OF SINGLE-USE STYROFOAM CONTAINERS, **and**

H.B. No. 5385 (COMM) AN ACT REQUIRING THE ELIMINATION OF SINGLE-USE PLASTIC STRAWS, **and**

H.B. No. 7294 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING BOTTLE REDEMPTION IN THE STATE.

I also support S.B. No. 1003 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF SINGLE-USE PLASTIC AND PAPER BAGS, **but ask that it be amended to also charge for paper bags to encourage shoppers to bring their own bag instead of increasing paper waste.**

I grew up in Southern Colorado and personally started recycling in 1971, at age 8. As a family we were already bundling our newspapers and card board boxes in neat piles tied with string which were picked up with our garbage each week. However, when I needed to come up with a new badge for Girl Scouts I did some research and found that we could also recycle our glass bottles and cans, which had to have the label removed, both ends cut off, rinsed and smashed. I created an Ecology badge which showed how to recycle, how to compost, how to repair items and how to reuse items. Plastic bags were not a thing back then, so this was not part of my focus. Single-use plastic bags were not common in stores until the mid to late 1970s.

About ten years ago my home town and many others in Colorado stopped collecting recyclables because the stockpile of items and inability to dispose of them had reached a breaking point. There are satellite stations where compulsive recyclers can drop off their cans and bottles, but not paper and cardboard. It is sad because the current generation is not learning to recycle like I did decades ago.

Faced with rising costs of recycling and disposing of waste the goal now should be waste reduction. One very easy way is to encourage the use reusable bags for shopping by eliminating single-use plastic bags and charging for paper bags. This small step will reduce both plastic and paper bag waste. In addition, if stores use paper bags made from recycled paper like Whole Foods, the waste stream is reduced further. Big Y recently announced that they are phasing out single-use plastic bags. Whole Foods, which offers plastic bags for produce only, is similarly phasing them out. There are already many stores that do not provide any bags at all including BJs, ALDI, Costco, and SAM'S.

I know that people worry that there will not be any plastic bags for things like pet waste disposal. This is not a problem because there is so much plastic that comes into your home which can be used for that purpose, like the bag wrapped around the newspaper, bread bags, used Ziploc bags, packaging from purchased items like electronics, and frozen food bags. You can also use paper bags, including gift bags, and even fashion a bag from the newspaper.

The reason that I started limiting the plastic bags in my life was not for economic reasons, but for environmental reasons. In an article by Laura Parker published in National Geographic, June 2018, entitled "[We Made Plastic. We Depend On It. Now We're Drowning In It,](#)" she reveals that an astounding 18 billion pounds of plastic waste ends up in our oceans every year. Plastic waste breaks down into smaller plastic particles, microplastics, which remain in the water for hundreds of years, or worse, forever killing wildlife and threatening the future of our planet. Styrofoam cups are one of the worst

forms of plastic pollution because it never fully degrades, instead leaving behind particles that remain in the environment for centuries.

For a bird, fish or turtle, small pieces of plastic are easily mistaken for food. Millions of marine animals die each year from plastic waste which can cause irritation or damage to the digestive system. If plastics are kept in the gut instead of passing through, the fish feel full (of plastic not food) and this can lead to malnutrition or starvation. Other sea creatures are strangled by abandoned fishing nets or discarded six-pack rings. In April 2018, a young sperm whale washed up on a beach in southern Spain. Scientists determined that it was killed by 64 pounds of waste lodged in its stomach. Most of it was plastic, but there were also ropes, pieces of net and other debris.

The amount of non-degradable plastic marine litter is expected to triple within the decade. Plastics have even been found in Arctic ice and more than a trillion bits of plastic could be released into our waters as glaciers melt.

On Hawaii's Big Island, at Kamilo Point Beach, a beach that should be pristine since no paved road leads to it, Laura Parker walked ankle-deep through microplastics, crunching like Rice Krispies under her feet. Kamilo Point Beach catches plastic from the North Pacific gyre, the trashiest of five swirling current systems that transport garbage around the ocean basins and concentrate it in great patches. At Kamilo Point the beach is piled with laundry baskets, bottles, and containers with labels in Chinese, Japanese, Korean, English, and occasionally, Russian. On some beaches on the Big Island of Hawaii, as much as 15 percent of the sand is actually grains of microplastic.

In addition, there are now serious health concerns in regard to consuming fish that contain plastic. The plastic consumed by a fish, which is made with petro-chemicals, stays in its body and is consumed by humans who eat the contaminated fish.

I know that environmental problems are not as important to most people as economic problems, but single-use plastic bags, plastic straws and Styrofoam containers and trays are both and are not needed in our state.

Kristine Vitelli