

**Linda Herman - Consideration of a Possible Plastic Bag Ban Ordinance (STF Agenda Item 3) - Support**

---

**From:** "Sue Vang" <suevang@cawrecycles.org>  
**To:** <lherman@ci.chico.ca.us>  
**Date:** 12/5/2011 3:30 PM  
**Subject:** Consideration of a Possible Plastic Bag Ban Ordinance (STF Agenda Item 3) - Support  
**Attachments:** CAW Letter of Support Chico STF.pdf

---

Dear Ms. Herman,

On behalf of Californians Against Waste, one of the nation's leading nonprofit environmental research and advocacy organizations focused on waste reduction and recycling, I respectfully submit a letter in support of Agenda Item 3 at tonight's Sustainability Task Force Meeting, Consideration of a Possible Plastic Bag Ban Ordinance.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

**Sue Vang**

Policy Associate | Californians Against Waste  
921 11th Street, Suite 420 | Sacramento, CA 95814  
(p) 916-443-5422 | (f) 916-443-3912  
www.cawrecycles.org

Get updates and support us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or [Causes](#)!



# Californians Against Waste

Conserving Resources. Preventing Pollution. Protecting the Environment.

December 5, 2011

Mayor Ann Schwab, Chair  
City of Chico, Sustainability Task Force  
411 Main Street  
Chico, CA 95928

**Re: Consideration of a Possible Plastic Bag Ban Ordinance (Agenda Item 3) – Support**

Dear Honorable Mayor Schwab:

Californians Against Waste (CAW) is one of the nation's leading nonprofit research and advocacy organizations focused on waste reduction and recycling. We strongly urge the Sustainable Task Force to move forward with an ordinance to phase out single-use plastic bags in the City of Chico. Single-use plastic bags are a costly, environmentally damaging, and easily preventable source of pollution. Light and aerodynamic, plastic bags are uniquely litter-prone even when properly disposed and pose a threat to the environment. For all intents and purposes, plastic never biodegrades. Instead, it breaks down into smaller pieces that attract surrounding toxins and form a progressively greater risk of contamination to the environment and our food chain.

In addition to the environmental costs, there are economic costs to plastic bag pollution. Plastic bags make up a disproportionate share of the litter stream, harming stormwater systems and increasing cleanup costs for local agencies. While the useful life of plastic bags is measured in minutes, their end-life is measured in decades. Plastic bags are many times more expensive to landfill or recycle than to produce them. And while local bans and the public's shift to reusable bags has caused a 50% reduction in single-use bags since 2005, Californians still spend a staggering \$530 million annually in higher grocery costs to subsidize single-use bags.

We have analyzed the best available data on the impacts of banning single-use plastic bags, and believe that a reduction of plastic bags currently distributed in Chico will result in a substantial net environmental and economic benefit. Prohibiting the distribution of single-use plastic bags may initially result in some return to the use of recycled paper bags, but any environmental and economic cost associated with the use of paper bags will be more than offset by the elimination of single-use plastic. The manufacture and use of paper bags generates lower greenhouse gas emissions than that of plastic bags. Moreover, three years after the City of San Francisco's ban, local stores are reporting modest (18%) or no increase in demand for single-use paper bags.

CAW has worked with retailers, bag manufacturers, and local governments to try to manage single-use plastic bags through recycling. We sponsored AB 2449 (Levine) which provides in-store recycling for plastic bags. Despite establishing the state's largest collection infrastructure for a single material, efforts to manage plastic bags through recycling have failed. In 2009, less than 3% of plastic bags were recycled. Last year's efforts to enact a statewide ban of plastic bags with AB 1998 (Brownley) failed to pass Senate. Chico and other municipalities, who are primarily responsible for the clean-up cost of plastic litter, can not wait for state action.

Plastic marine pollution is a global problem with local solutions. The phase out of single-use plastic bags is a proven solution for combating waste and the environmental and financial costs of plastic bag litter. CAW thanks the City of Chico for your environmental leadership and urges you to prioritize an ordinance on plastic bags.

Sincerely,

Mark Murray  
Executive Director

cc: Sustainability Task Force Members