

New research finds Washingtonians overwhelmingly support banning single use plastic bags as Senate votes 30-19 to pass Reusable Bag Bill

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OLYMPIA — More than two in three Washingtonians agree that single use plastic bags should be prohibited at retail establishments across the Evergreen State, the Northwest Progressive Institute's most recent statewide survey has found.

69% of nine hundred Washington voters surveyed last October on NPI's behalf said that they agreed that single use plastic bags ought to be banned. Just 26% disagreed. 6% said they were not sure.

The finding was announced today at a press conference in Olympia by the Northwest Progressive Institute's Andrew Villeneuve, State Senator Mona Das, State Representative Strom Peterson, Heather Trim of Zero Waste Washington and Gus Gates of The Surfrider Foundation **on the same day that the Washington State Senate voted thirty to nineteen to pass the Reusable Bag Bill — [ESSB 5323](#) — for a second consecutive year.**

Das and Peterson are sponsors of legislation in the Washington State Legislature that would reduce plastic pollution in Washington by banning single use plastic bags at all stores.

"Our research clearly shows that Washingtonians are eager for legislation that will reduce plastic pollution in our communities and in our rivers, lakes, and oceans," said Northwest Progressive Institute founder and Executive Director Andrew Villeneuve.

"Single use plastic bags require a significant amount of energy to create, but are typically used for only a few minutes before being discarded," Villeneuve noted. "Our team at NPI is grateful to Senator Das and Representative Peterson for championing legislation that will begin to address this problem, allowing us to better care for the Earth, our common home."

Last session, a large bipartisan majority in the Washington State Senate backed [Senator Das' ESSB 5323](#), but it did not receive a vote in the Washington State House. With today's vote, the bill returns to the House for further consideration.

"I thank my fellow senators for moving this bill forward so quickly," said Senator Das. "Reducing carryout plastic bags will make a real difference for the health of our waterways, ocean, and communities."

"I look forward to action in the House," said Representative Strom Peterson. "Let's get this legislation all the way to Governor Jay Inslee's desk this year."

NPI's survey found majority support for banning single use plastic bags in every region of the state, even in Eastern and Central Washington. 53% of voters there agree retailers should be prohibited from handing out single use plastic bags, while 39% disagree and 9% were not sure.

"In our beach cleanups, we have collected thousands of pounds of marine debris, the majority of which is plastic," said Gus Gates, Washington Policy Manager for the Surfrider Foundation. "If a bathtub is overflowing, the first

thing to do is turn off the valve. The Reusable Bag Bill enables us to reduce marine debris by tackling the problem right at the source.”

“Plastic has been documented in marine habitats all over the planet, even in the deepest ocean trench,” said Dr. Erin Meyer, Director of Conservation Programs and Partnerships at the Seattle Aquarium. “Whales, dolphins, porpoises, turtles, seabirds and fish have all been found with harmful plastic in their stomachs.”

“Our recycling facilities across the state no longer want plastic bags and film,” said Heather Trim, Executive Director, Zero Waste Washington. “It clogs their systems, is expensive to remove plastic films from their machinery and dangerous for the workers. This bill will save money.”

Under the bill, retailers can offer 40% post-consumer content recycled paper bags or thicker 2.25 mil reusable plastic bags, with a minimum eight cent pass-through charge that offsets their cost of providing those alternative bags. This charge helps motivate people to remember to bring their own bags.

Participants in food assistance programs are exempt from the pass-through charge.

“Marine debris is a major threat to water quality, wildlife, and the overall health of Puget Sound,” said Chris Rilling, Executive Director, Puget Soundkeeper. “Single use plastics bags are a major constituent of marine debris and banning single use plastic carry out bags is a common sense measure to improve environmental quality of Puget Sound.”

The full question NPI asked and the answers from respondents are as follows:

QUESTION: Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement: Washington State should reduce ocean pollution and waste in landfills by prohibiting retailers from handing out thin, single use plastic bags, while allowing stores to provide their customers with paper bags or durable, reusable plastic bags for eight cents each, with the eight cent fee waived for those on food stamps?

ANSWERS:

- Agree: 69%
 - Strongly Agree: 48%
 - Somewhat Agree: 21%
- Disagree: 26%
 - Somewhat Disagree: 7%
 - Strongly Disagree: 19%
- Not Sure: 6%

The survey of nine hundred likely 2019 Washington State voters was in the field October 22nd-23rd, 2019. The survey used a blended methodology with automated phone calls to landlines and text messages to cell phone only respondents. The poll was conducted by Public Policy Polling for the Northwest Progressive Institute, and has a margin of error of +/- 3.3% at the 95% confidence level.

[These findings are also available in a post on NPI's Cascadia Advocate.](#)

About NPI

The [Northwest Progressive Institute](#) is a netroots powered strategy center working to raise America's quality of life through insightful research and imaginative advocacy. NPI was founded in 2003 and is based in Redmond, WA.

The Reusable Bag Bill is supported by a partnership of organizations:

Environment Washington is a citizen-based environmental advocacy project combining independent research, practical ideas and tough-minded advocacy.

Puget Soundkeeper's mission is to protect and preserve the waters of Puget Sound.

Seattle Aquarium inspires conservation and takes action for our marine environment.

Surfrider Foundation is dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of the world's ocean, waves and beaches through a powerful activist network.

Zero Waste Washington protects people and our natural world by advocating for products designed and produced to be healthy, safe, and continually recycled and reused.

ENCLOSURE: REUSABLE BAG FACT SHEET [View the partnership's two page bill fact sheet by following this link.](#) The fact sheet includes a list of the local jurisdictions in Washington State that have adopted their own single use plastic bag bans.