



## House passes Das's and Peterson's "Reusable Bag Act," banning single-use plastic bags

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OLYMPIA — A bill passed today by the House would reduce pollution by prohibiting all retailers in Washington state from handing out single-use plastic bags. The bill passed the Senate on Jan. 15 on a vote of 30-19 and today passed the House on a vote of 67-29.

Sen. Mona Das (D-Kent) sponsored [Senate Bill 5323](#), which is supported by a broad coalition of stakeholders, including retailers and environmentalists.

"Today is such a victory for Washington," said Das. "Our beautiful shoreline is increasingly littered with plastic waste, and it hurts our state. It's not good for animals, for natural habitats, for our planet. It's not good for us. We bear a responsibility to make this right, and today we took responsible action."

"The actions we take today affect the Washington we will leave for future generations," said Rep. Strom Peterson (D-Edmonds), sponsor of the companion House bill. "Plastic pollution has gotten worse in the 11 years since I first championed a reusable bag ordinance while on the Edmonds city council. Reducing plastic bag pollution means healthier waterways, more robust fish populations, and cleaner forests. I am excited to see this get over the finish line."

This bill would allow retailers — including grocers — to provide paper bags or reusable, plastic film, 2.25 mil bags for 8 cents each. The reusable bags must meet standards for strength, durability and recycled content. The 8-cent pass-through charge would help retailers recover the costs of the paper or durable plastic bags and create an incentive for shoppers to bring their own bags. In 2026, the allowed plastic film bags would increase in thickness from 2.25 to 4 mil and the pass-through charge would increase to 12 cents.

Shoppers who bring their own reusable bags would not be charged. People using the State Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program; or the state Food Assistance Program (FAP) would also not be subject to the pass-through charge.

Thirty-eight jurisdictions throughout Washington state — comprising about one-third of Washington's jurisdictions, and hundreds of thousands of Washingtonians — have enacted plastic bag ban measures, up from 28 jurisdictions when this bill was heard on the Senate floor in March of 2019. SB 5323 is modeled after those local laws and applies one uniform set of regulations to the state.

"I can't think of a more important job for us as state legislators than protecting Washingtonians, and part of that means protecting our planet," Das said. "Especially since the gravity of the climate crisis is taken less seriously by some at the national level, we need to do what we can here in Washington. We only get one planet. We need to care for it."

The stakeholders who helped craft the legislation voiced resounding support for today's passage of the bill.

Jan Gee, President and CEO of the Washington Food Industry Association: "It is a good day for the environment, consumers, local government, the timber industry in the state and our local grocers that we will all be working together to reduce pollution from film plastic bags and the promotion of reusable retail bags."

Heather Trim, Executive Director, Zero Waste Washington: "This builds on 38 local bag ordinances in Washington and takes them statewide. It will reduce plastic pollution and help reduce the load of plastic bags that are going into the recycling system and clogging the equipment."

Gus Gates, Washington Policy Manager with the Surfrider Foundation: "The passage of the Reusable Bag bill is an important step in Washington's efforts to eliminate a chronic source of plastic pollution from our watersheds, beaches, and ocean."

Dr. Erin Meyer, Director of Conservation Programs and Partnerships at the Seattle Aquarium: "Almost 9 million tons of plastic enter the ocean each year. And our research team finds microplastics in all of our water samples right here in Washington. This legislation will help reduce plastic pollution and protect our marine wildlife."

Pam Clough, interim director of Environment Washington: "Nothing we use for a few minutes should pollute our waters for centuries."

Derek Ruckman, Vice President of Recology: "I am so excited to see this bill pass. Not only have single-use plastic bags contaminated our environment, our oceans and waterways, but they have also significantly clogged our recycling equipment at the sorting facility. This bill will improve our ability to sort recyclables and improve the quality of our commodities. Well done."

Alyssa Barton, Policy Manager, Puget Soundkeeper: "We're proud that Washington has taken this step to reduce plastic marine debris while transitioning to reusable bags. Together we can achieve a future where all our waters are swimmable, drinkable and fishable."

SB 5323 now heads back to the Senate for the concurrence process.

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**Print-quality photos:**

Headshot: <http://leg.wa.gov/Senate/Senators/PublishingImages/Das.jpg>

Headshot: <http://leg.wa.gov/House/Representatives/PublishingImages/Peterson.jpg>

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