

LATE TESTIMONY

Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Representative Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair
Economic Development and Business Concerns Committee
April 4, 2008

IN SUPPORT OF H.R. 160 and H.C.R. 191.

I would like to testify in support of H.R. 160 and H.C.R. 191. Hawai'i has a vested interest in maintaining a pristine ecology because of our unique environment within the country, and the tourist revenue upon which we rely so heavily because of it.

Plastic bags are not sustainable, due to the damage that they cause our environment and because they are petroleum-based products. With Peak Oil on the horizon, plastic bags and other petroleum-based products are going to become more and more expensive. If we do not have a market in place for sustainable alternatives, we will not be ready when the move away from plastic is forced upon us. **Our businesses and consumers deserve the support of the government as we move toward an environmentally and economically sustainable future.**

Denmark, Italy, Australia, South Africa, China, Germany, Bangladesh, Singapore, South Korea, Ireland, Kenya, Taiwan, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda have banned plastic bags or are discouraging their use through government action. Nigeria, and Scotland as well as the rest of the United Kingdom are considering similar legislation. Mumbai (formerly Bombay), India has also banned plastic bags.

Ireland added a Plas Tax in 2002, a levy of 20 cents per bag. In the following year, the use of plastic bags dropped about 95%. "There certainly hasn't been an angry uprising of shoppers saying we want our bags for free," notes Claire Wilton of Greenpeace-UK.

When Taiwan introduced plastics restrictions, the country's overall solid waste output declined by about 25%. A poll in Taiwan reports that 80% of consumers support the plastics restriction, even though a full one-third admit they find the restrictions inconvenient. When the use of plastic bags stops being the standard and a choice is presented to consumers, they will choose reusable alternatives.

Hawai'i should be leading the world to a sustainable future, but instead we are far behind. A documentary entitled Message in the Waves about plastic refuse in Hawai'i caused a community **eleven time zones** away to ban plastic bags. We are way behind, and we're beginning to look pretty bad because of it.

I thank you for this opportunity to testify.
Kati Corlew
808-944-5554

**THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER IS
PLEASED TO SUBMIT THIS TESTIMONY IN ACCORDANCE
WITH ACT 132 OF 1970 WHICH CREATED THE CENTER.
AUTHORS ARE MEMBERS OF THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY.**

RL: 2210

LATE TESTIMONY

HCR 191
REQUESTING COUNTIES TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT
PROGRAMS TO ENCOURAGE RETAILERS TO INCREASE THE USE
OF ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE ALTERNATIVES TO NON-
BIODEGRADABLE PLASTIC BAGS

House Committee on Economic Development & Business Concerns

Public Hearing – April 4, 2008
9:30 a.m., State Capitol, Conference Room 325

By

Mary Tiles, Department of Philosophy and Chair of the Sustainability Council
Erin Woods, Environmental Studies
Peter Rappa, Environmental Center

HCR 191 requests that counties develop and implement programs encouraging retailers to increase the use of environmentally preferable alternatives to non-biodegradable plastic bags, that the county programs should encourage retailers to provide only compostable or reusable bags to customers; and that the county programs should encourage recycling of non-biodegradable plastic bags and community participation in reducing environmental, social, and economic impacts. We emphasize that our testimony on this measure does not represent an official position of the University of Hawaii.

In an effort to reduce the volume of plastic entering the waste stream, this proposal makes sense. Encouraging customers to bring reusable bags should help prevent the mindless proliferation and accumulation of thin plastic bags that create litter and additional volume in landfill. Plastic bags have limited use and are non-biodegradable. Additionally, they are a byproduct of petroleum, therefore subject to significant price increase. Plastic bags also present a serious threat to Hawaii's fragile environment and the endemic species that make Hawaii unique. They not only threaten local ecology, they also help to pollute the environment.

This resolution also calls for the use of compostable bags. Emphasis on compostable bags however only makes sense if customers are likely to be disposing of the bags along with waste that is going to be composted. If the waste is going to H-power or to the landfill, composting is not going to occur. A requirement for using compostable bags makes more sense for the disposal of green waste collected for composting.

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Other jurisdictions have instituted fees for the use of plastic bags. The country of Ireland instituted a fee of fifteen cents per plastic bag used and has been able to reduce the use of plastic bags by 90 percent. The city of Seattle is poised to charge a fee of twenty cents per non reusable bag (either paper or plastic) and on all foam containers. The city plans to give a reusable grocery bag to every resident free of charge. They expect to see a sharp reduction in the number of plastic bags used.

The Hawaii state legislature held hearings this session on requiring retailers to recycle plastic bags or banning their use but tabled both ideas for the time being. The state needs to move aggressively to decrease the number of plastics bags. Working with the counties could work if the County Councils are interested in curbing this form of solid waste.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this resolution.

LATE TESTIMONY

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April 4, 2008

TO: Honorable Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
House COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND BUSINESS CONCERNS

FROM: Michael J. Molina
Council Member

DATE: Friday, April 4, 2008

SUBJECT: **SUPPORT OF HCR 191, RELATING TO REQUESTING COUNTIES TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT PROGRAMS TO ENCOURAGE RETAILERS TO INCREASE THE USE OF ENVIROMENTALLY PREFERABLE ALTERNATIVE TO NON-BIODEGRADABLE PLASTIC BAGS**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this important measure. The purpose of this measure is to request counties to develop and implement programs to encourage retailers to increase the use of environmentally preferable alternatives to non-biodegradable plastic bags.

I support this measure for the following reasons:

1. Counties throughout the State of Hawaii have already taken the initiative to introduce legislation that would restrict the distribution of non-biodegradable plastic bags. Counties should have the discretion to enact far reaching and more restrict legislation to protect their respective environs. Waste management policies are likely to have substantial impacts on local economic, social and environmental conditions. Therefore, local government should retain authority on decisions about waste-management policies to the greatest possible extent.
2. Even though this measure encourages recycling of non-biodegradable plastic bags it must be noted that cities and countries throughout the world, such as Australia, Ireland, London and San Francisco have initiated voluntary recycling programs that have proven unsuccessful. As a result these local and federal authorities have decided or considering full bans on the use of non-biodegradable plastic bags. The EPA notes that only 5.2% of plastic bags were recycled in 2005. Logistics of sorting, contamination, low quality of plastic used in bags and lack of suitable markets make recycling inefficient.
3. The County of Maui estimates that over 50 million plastic bags are utilized each year; approximately 300 bags per resident. The County spends over \$200,000 per year in plastic bag clean up. Non-biodegradable plastic bags are everywhere, on the streets, fences, trees, beaches, the ocean, county parks and facilities. Plastic bags are littering Maui's scenic vistas, causing a visual blight and must be eliminated from our communities.

For the foregoing reasons, I support this measure.

CM:MHP:plastic_bags_testimony02:grs

LATE TESTIMONY



Styrophobia.com
a natural way to go...

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Testimony before: Committee on Economic Development and Business Concerns (EDB)

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Wakai and members of the committee

April 4th, 2008 9:30am, Conference Room 325

Subject: SUPPORT OF HCR 191, RELATING TO REQUESTING COUNTIES TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT PROGRAMS TO ENCOURAGE RETAILERS TO INCREASE THE USE OF ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE ALTERNATIVE TO NON-BIODEGRADABLE PLASTIC BAGS

Strong Hawaii winds blow plastic bags across the parks and into the ocean, like toxic tumbleweeds. These bags end up often times in the ocean, harming marine life, including fish, turtles, and seabirds – either by choking, or by the plastic remains blocking digestion. Taxpayers cover the cost – in reduced tourism, cleanup efforts, and contaminated compost.

This resolution recognizes the critical issues at stake for our environment, and encourages Counties to examine the issue and to take responsible action. The State has decided not to tackle a ban this session. Thus, Counties should be free to take on the issue and encouraged to look at the facts.

There are better alternatives than ever, including inexpensive reusable bags and disposable biodegradable bags. The cost of reusable bags is as low as 99 cents at Safeway, and the cost is lower over the months they are used and reused. The consumer cost is even further lowered, considering the State, City and County workers tasked with collecting and disposing of the bags that don't make it to the ocean.

These plastics end up in landfills across the state, taking hundreds of years to degrade into toxic leachate, which is then pumped through out wastewater plants, into the ocean, carrying heavy metals and toxins the wastewater biology can not capture. What is the cost of shipping our trash to the mainland? Up to 50% of our trash can be composted – biodegradable bags encourage this economically and environmentally friendly diversion.

Plastic bags are the #1 enemy of commercial composting facilities. They contaminate the compost, get wrapped in the splines of processing equipment, and reduce the value of the compost product. Biodegradable bags on the other hand, compost within days and do not require separation.

Plastic bags notoriously litter our streets, parks, and are eyesores for our residents and tourists. Tourists remember the trash and it has a negative impact on our repeat visitors and economy. Tourists come to Hawaii to see nature, not plastic bags.

Styrophobia has done extensive research on the cost, availability and practical distribution of biodegradable replacements for plastic bags. These bags are widely available and the cost will significantly drop as demand and volume shipping costs drop. Presently, we can offer a BioBag for around 13 cents, whereas a plastic bag costs around 5 cents. As petroleum prices rise, and biodegradable demand increases, we can close the gap.

In addition, the plant-based resins that are used to make biodegradable bags can and are being introduced to existing petroleum-based bag manufacturers. This would significantly reduce the local price of these bags and promote local manufacturing.

Somehow we were able to get by before petroleum bags came around. Let's stop this toxic cycle and offer a healthy, sustainable alternative. San Francisco has shown us it can be done – overcoming the misinformation lobbies - Hawaii can do it too – we are an island dependant on a healthy and clean landscape. Please pass this important bill though.

Facts or Fiction: Opposing Testimony 3/27/08

RMH continues to point out that compostable bags do not biodegrade in a landfill and that there is no commercial composting facility. They are wrong - these bags can and will biodegrade at the current Hawaiian Earth Products commercial composting facility. Further, there are plans underway to expand Oahu to accept food waste for composting (see Mayor's State of County address).

By capturing food scraps in compostable bags, commercial composting can divert up to 50% of our landfill volume. These facilities also exist on Maui and Kauai, with plans underway for the Big Island. Further, it has been proven that composting can significantly limit CO2 emissions with currently available technology in closed vessels.

All of the paper vs. plastic arguments are negated by the aforementioned bioplastic replacements. While the report admits plastics litter, there is no mention of marine pollution, or costs of recovery/cleanup efforts.

Plastic bags are not being recycled. The one "Wal-Mart" example was a single event and it costs \$3,500 just to ship that container off-island, let alone trucking and recycling costs. The greenhouse gasses from this transportation and recycling destroy any positive environmental benefit.

Finally, this is not a ban as is being indicated in opposing testimony – this resolution simply states the facts, and is the "carrot approach" to encouraging business, not the stick.

Mahalo for your support of this resolution without amendment,

Mike Elhoff
Styrophobia LLC

Pacific Business News (Honolulu) - April 2, 2008
<http://pacific.bizjournals.com/pacific/stories/2008/03/31/daily38.html>

PACIFIC BUSINESS NEWS

Wednesday, April 2, 2008 - 12:32 PM HAST

Seattle mayor wants bag tax, foam box ban

Pacific Business News (Honolulu)

Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels wants the city's grocery, drug and convenience stores to start charging a 20-cent tax on disposable bags beginning next year and he also wants to ban plastic-foam food containers in the city.

The Seattle City Council would have to approve the measures, which would take effect Jan. 1, 2009.

Nickels says that both paper and plastic bags are "harmful to the environment" and banning foam food containers will reduce the use of "environmentally harmful plastics and cut the production of greenhouse gases."

Stores would keep 5 cents of the 20-cent tax for administrative costs and those retailers with less than \$1 million in annual revenues would keep all 20 cents.

Both paper and plastic bags "harm" the environment, Nickels said, saying that paper bags, because of the "environmental costs" of logging and shipping, "are actually worse for the planet" than plastic bags.

"The answer to the question 'paper or plastic' is neither ... The best way to handle a ton of waste is not to create it ... Taking a reusable bag to grocery stores and pharmacies is a simple thing that has an enormous impact," Nickels said in a statement.

Banned foam products would include plates, trays, "clamshells," and hot and cold beverage cups. Seattle Public Utilities will hire inspectors to check stores to make sure they weren't using the products, Nickels' office said.

Several bills have been introduced in Hawaii to ban plastic bags and foam takeout containers, but the measures haven't found any traction in the Legislature.

Puget Sound Business Journal (Seattle)

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Plastic bags may be banned in Boston

Councilors cite ecological harm

Plastic bags, which sometimes become litter in tree branches, would be banned in a measure before the Boston City Council. (DAVID L. RYAN/GLOBE STAFF)

By Matt Viser, Globe Staff | April 26, 2007

The Boston City Council wants to ban the use of plastic shopping bags at supermarkets, pharmacies, and convenience stores in the city, saying the ubiquitous bags are a hazard to the environment and a maddening blight of the landscape.

"They end up everywhere," said Councilor Robert Consalvo. "They blow in trees, they're floating in Boston Harbor . . . They're an environmental nightmare. We need to rid our city of these plastic bags."

A measure sponsored by Consalvo and endorsed by nine of the council's 12 sitting members seeks a ban on disposable plastic bags at large retail stores. The measure also proposes possibilities for increased recycling of the bags, such as collection bins around the city or curbside pick up.

The proposal yesterday advanced to the council's Committee on City and Neighborhood Services, where details of the measure are to be ironed out. With three-fourths of the councilors cosponsoring the measure, it is likely to have broad support when it returns to the full council for a final vote. Mayor Thomas M. Menino would have to sign the measure for it to become law.

The proposal comes amid growing concern over plastic shopping bags, some 100 billion of which end up in American landfills each year, according to Worldwatch Institute, an environmental research agency.

The bags are popular among stores because they are cheap to manufacture, costing less than one cent per bag, and many consumers prefer them because they are easy to carry. But environmentalists have railed against them because they are difficult to recycle and take centuries to decompose in landfills.

San Francisco recently banned the bags, requiring large retailers to use recyclable materials, and a host of other cities, including Phoenix, Santa Cruz, Calif., and Portland, Ore., are considering similar measures.

Meanwhile, state Senator Brian A. Joyce is drawing up plans to file a bill proposing a statewide law that would charge store customers a fee if they elect plastic over other

kinds of bags. If the bill passed, the fee would start at 2 cents per bag in 2008 and gradually increase to 15 cents per bag in the seventh year, according to a draft of the plan, which would apply to supermarkets that annually gross more than \$1 million. The revenue would go toward the state's recycling programs and toward improving consumer awareness of environmental problems caused by plastic bags.

"It's a measure whose time has come," said Joyce, a Milton Democrat. "People are increasingly aware of the harmful effects things have on the environment."

But industry groups representing supermarkets, pharmacies, and convenience stores are against any legislative restrictions on the bags, saying that customers should have a choice. Some said that many consumers reuse the bags, saving them for household jobs such as lining trash cans or picking up after a dog. They also said lawmakers are misdirecting their efforts.

"We're trying to use a hammer to kill a fly," said Christopher Flynn, president of the Massachusetts Food Association, which represents the state's supermarket chains. "You're targeting and making the plastic bags a scapegoat for litter and environmental issues, which is not the ultimate problem. The problem is individuals and their own behavior."

"In our experience, plastic bags are very convenient for folks, and we think folks do like the ease of them and the size," said Bill Rennie, public affairs director of the Retailers Association of Massachusetts, which represents 3,000 pharmacies, convenience stores, and independent grocers. "We don't want to move to an outright ban. We want to move toward an educational process and get consumers well-educated on the issue."

Several businesses already have subtly been trying to discourage their customers from using disposable plastic bags. IKEA, the home furnishing store, last month began charging US customers 5 cents a bag. As an alternative, the store sells large reusable plastic bags for 59 cents. Within the last year, Shaw's and Stop & Shop have started selling \$1 reusable plastic bags, and they have placed bins at the front of their stores so that customers can return plastic bags, which can be used as an ingredient in composite decking.

Neither store would provide the number of paper and plastic bags they use each year.

Menino administration officials yesterday declined to say whether the mayor would sign a measure banning plastic shopping bags but said it would get serious consideration.

"This is something worth looking at," said James W. Hunt, Menino's chief of environmental and energy services. "The issues are, can the marketplace take care of itself, either through its own initiatives, or through alternatives like corn-based plastics, or is government intervention needed? It's certainly a discussion worth having."

Hunt said the city has been studying ways to cut the number of unrecyclable plastic bags in Boston, examining issues including the financial impact that a ban would have on local stores and what it would cost the city to enforce a ban.

Plastic grocery bags were first introduced in the United States in 1977 and now account for 90 percent of the bags handed out at grocery stores nationwide, according to the Progressive Bag Alliance, a group of plastic bag manufacturers. In 2005, 5.2 percent of plastic bags and sacks were recycled, compared with 21 percent of paper bags and sacks, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

Still, the production of paper bags produces more water and air pollution than plastic bags, according to the EPA, which promotes the use of reusable bags. Paper bags also take up more space in landfills.

Boston has a recycling program, which in 2005 recovered 17 percent of the 302,000 tons of waste generated by the city. But the city does not accept plastic bags in its program, instead encouraging residents to take the bags back to the retailer.

LATE TESTIMONY

April 3, 2008

To: House committee on Economic Development and Business Concerns (EDB)

Att: Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair

Re: Testimony in Support of HCR 191, HCR 192, and HCR 193

I am writing in support of HCR 191, HCR 192 and HCR 193. As the Kokua Festival Coordinator and an involved member of the Plastic Free Haleiwa Coalition, I feel strongly that we need to seek out alternatives to plastic and styrofoam. We have found the alternatives to plastic and styrofoam and put them into practice through our annual Kokua Festival event.

The Kokua Festival is a benefit concert for the Kokua Hawaii Foundation, a 501c3 nonprofit here in Hawaii. We support environmental education in Hawaii's schools and communities. The Festival is a functioning example of what can be done here in Hawaii.

At the Kokua Festival, we have Zero Waste areas. These areas are staffed with volunteers from Kamehameha, Kahuku, Mid-Pacific, and Punahou schools who assist us in educating the crowd. These areas have four waste bins; a food scraps bin, a compostable bin, a recycling bin, and finally a very small rubbish bin. We ask our booth vendors, as well as the Waikiki Shell vendors, to use biodegradable and compostable materials for their food service. We do not permit plastic bags to used or sold.

We teach the event attendees to scrape their plates thoroughly, the food scraps are given to pig farms for food and since the plates, forks, napkins, straws, cups...are all made of biodegradable and compostable materials we shred them after the event with green waste so the waste then returns to dirt. We encourage the attendees to bring their own reusable water bottle and offer free, cold, filtered water, thus cutting back on plastic water bottles and the amount of recycling and waste at the event. By the time the event attendee gets to the last bin, which is rubbish, there isn't anything for them to throw away!

Due to the landfill issues here in Hawaii, we must choose alternatives to plastic and styrofoam. What may seem an impossible obstacle is possible, just ask the 16,000 attendees of the Kokua Festival if it can be done. We are fortunate to have so many people that help us at the Festival, but those people are the youth of Hawaii and they want to see change. Let's follow their example and get rid of single-use plastic and styrofoam in Hawaii.

Thank you for your time.

Aloha,
Katie Pere

Kokua Festival Coordinator
Kokua Hawaii Foundation, Director of Greening and Events

LATE TESTIMONY

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & BUSINESS CONCERNS
Friday, April 4, 2008 - 9:30 A.M. – State Capitol Room 325

Re: Strong support for:

HCR191/HR160 – REQUESTING COUNTIES TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT PROGRAMS TO ENCOURAGE RETAILERS TO INCREASE THE USE OF ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE ALTERNATIVES TO NON-BIODEGRADABLE PLASTIC BAGS

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice-Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committee:

The Sierra Club O`ahu Group is in strong support of HCR192/HR161, HCR193/HR162, and HCR191/HR160. Each of these resolutions represents an important step toward eliminating harmful waste and pollutants and transforming our island into a more sustainable place to live. The use of styrofoam products and non-biodegradable plastic bags has a significant detrimental environmental impact. This detrimental impact could easily be avoided by encouraging the use of readily available and affordable alternatives to these harmful products.

The State has spent considerable time, energy, and resources on figuring out how to encourage sustainable practices in Hawai`i. Passage of these resolutions is a simple, concrete way to begin implementation of the objectives and recommendations of the 2050 Sustainability Report. The 2050 Sustainability Report specifically encourages all government agencies to adopt sustainable practices, including by purchasing biodegradable products. Public support for sustainability measures is overwhelming and the time to take action of these recommendations is now.

The harmful effects of using styrofoam products and non-biodegradable plastic bags on both public health and our island ecosystem are well documented. Encouraging the State and private businesses to eliminate the use of styrofoam and non-biodegradable plastic bags protects marine mammals and other wildlife, makes economic sense, reduces the volume of waste headed for our already overflowing landfill, and will encourage the production of biodegradable products by local sugar cane companies.

Many businesses using styrofoam and non-biodegradable plastic bags are willing to make a change for the health of our communities and environment. Passage of these resolutions is one step toward giving both the State and private business the encouragement needed to make this change happen.

Mahalo for this opportunity to provide testimony and for your support of these important resolutions.

Sincerely,

Randy Ching
Chair, Sierra Club O`ahu Group
oahurandy@yahoo.com