

**CITIZENS
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FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

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Empowering Communities, Advocating Solutions.

**Local Law Amending Chapter 82 of The Village Code By
Adding An Article With Respect To Retail Checkout Bags**

Section 1. Chapter 82

Article VII

Retail Checkout Bags

Comments by Citizens Campaign for the Environment

April 14, 2011

Trustees of Southampton Village, thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Tara Bono, program coordinator for Citizens Campaign for the Environment (CCE). Supported by over 80,000 members in Connecticut and New York State, CCE empowers communities and advocates solutions to protect our public health and our shared environment. CCE believes that single-use disposable bags are environmentally harmful, and unnecessary.

CCE strongly supports the Village of Southampton adopting legislation to institute a ban on single use shopping bags at grocery stores and retail outlets village-wide. The ban will help reduce pollution from single-use bags, which litter our beaches, clog our streams and waterways, and endanger our wildlife.

CCE suggests that the proposed ban be expanded to include all single-use disposable bags. This would expand the environmental benefits of the legislation because shopping bags produced of paper also use sensitive environmental resources and create pollution. Providing a comprehensive bag ban that includes both plastic and paper would ensure that the environmental harm is not switched from one environmental resource to another.

This is a growing nationwide movement in several states and municipalities with several other states and municipalities to do away with this wasteful habit. Bag legislation, implemented across our nation and many other nations, has proven to be immensely effective to educate and change consumer's behavior to switch to reusable shopping bags. Examples of successful legislation can be found in Westport, Connecticut, as well as in Washington, D.C. where disposable bag use has been reduced 80% in just one year.

Consumers have relied on plastic shopping bags because they are convenient and appear to be free, but disposable bags are not free. Giving away disposable bags fails to account for the costs borne at many levels. Retailers pay for the bags, and then pass those costs onto consumers. Shopping bags are unsustainably produced with fossil fuels. And finally, communities pay for disposable bags that clog storm drains and litter roadways. Disposable bag pollution costs even more with its impact on our wildlife and natural environment.

Plastic bags pose deadly threats to avian and marine wildlife. Bags are often mistaken for jellyfish and consumed by sea turtles, starving these already endangered creatures. They become tangled around the necks of birds, fish, and dolphins, strangling them to death. Plastic pollution is conveyed by ocean currents and have concentrated into the Great Pacific Garbage patch- an island of plastic the size of Texas. Ocean currents transport debris from all over the world and deposit it in huge gyres, causing the problem to grow exponentially. Experts now say that there is more plastic in our oceans than plankton, and it's only getting worse. Plastic never goes away, instead it "photo degrades" and breaks into smaller pieces that look just like food to aquatic animals.

On Long Island, and especially on the east end, we rely heavily on our surrounding waterways for tourism, recreation, and fishing industries. Science now points to exposure to plastics and other toxic materials as a major contributor to the failure of lobster fisheries,¹ which once were a staple of our maritime economy.

Ending the give-away of shopping bags is a common-sense effort that creates an economic incentive to change consumer behavior. Adopting a ban on disposable check out bags promotes reusable bags and inspires positive change in retailer and consumer behavior to drastically reduce bag pollution.

Reusable bags are readily available, hold twice as many items as conventional shopping bags, and do not break as easily. They can be washed and used for years instead of just one day or a few minutes. A plastic bag has a lifetime of only 12 minutes, but a reusable bag prevents the use of hundreds of plastic bags.

The Village of Southampton now has an opportunity to stand out as a leader in sustainability, while protecting our precious marine resources, conserving fossil fuels, and reducing unsightly litter. CCE urges the Trustees of this village to adopt a ban on all disposable bags at the check-out.

I look forward to working with you on this issue, thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

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¹ According to Hans Laufer, a research professor in the Department of Molecular and Cellular Biology at the University of Connecticut