



Bottle Ban

BY HAILEE ROMAIN

Last week, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors unanimously voted to ban the sale of plastic water bottles in all public buildings and outdoor spaces. The city is now the largest in the U.S. to take such a stand on bottled water.

If the city's mayor signs the ordinance, then starting on October 1, 2014, city-sponsored indoor events will no longer be allowed to sell plastic water bottles under 21 ounces. Outdoor events will have a few more years to follow suit. Violators of the ban could face fines of up to \$1,000.

A CITY WITH NO WASTE?



San Francisco has a reputation for being an environmentally conscious community. It has started an initiative to become a zero-waste city by 2020. Municipal (local) officials are supporting a number of waste-reduction programs to reach this goal.

Some of the programs proposed by city leaders include a ban on disposable plastic bags in grocery stores and a mandatory composting program. Composting is a way to recycle some leftover food matter and turn it into fertilizer for plants.

Supervisor David Chiu wrote the legislation, or law. He says that producing, distributing, and disposing of plastic water bottles uses 2,000 times more energy than using tap water. He also points out that it can take up to 1,000 years for a typical plastic water bottle to biodegrade, or break down. With more than 93 billion plastic drink containers added to U.S. landfills each year, that's a whole lot of waste.

“We all know...San Francisco has been leading the way to fight for our environment,” Chiu said at the hearing to discuss the ban. “That’s why I ask you to support this ordinance to reduce and discourage single-use, single-serving plastic water bottles in San Francisco.”

WATER WORRIES

The city’s board passed the ban unanimously (without opposition). But some people are claiming that San Francisco doesn’t have enough alternative water sources, like water fountains and refilling stations, to make up for the ban on bottles. They are concerned that people without easy access to tap water will be more likely to buy sugary drinks—like juice and soda—which will still be sold in plastic bottles.

A few other officials have raised concerns about the economic impact of the ban. Some events may depend on the income from the sale of bottled water to make money. To address this issue, nonprofit events (or events that raise money for a special cause rather than to make a profit) have been given until 2018 to adhere to the new law.