



BEYOND PLASTIC

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Good news: Bag bans are reducing billions of single-use plastic bags

A recent report found that state- and city-wide bans successfully reduce plastic bag use and associated litter and pollution.



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Nearly a dozen states and hundreds of cities across the country have already saved billions of plastic bags. How? Well-designed single-use plastic bag bans have successfully reduced plastic bag use and associated litter and pollution.

“[Plastic Bag Bans Work](#),” a new report released by U.S. PIRG Education Fund, Environment America Research & Policy Center and Frontier Group, includes a Single-use Plastic Bag Ban Waste Reduction Calculator that helps us understand just how much waste we eliminate when plastic bags are banned. Let’s take a look.

Every city and town with a bag ban is having a big impact

Imagine this: With your fridge doors wide open, you finish counting the eggs left in their cardboard carton, then look over at your drinks before jotting down the final item on your grocery list (you'll need more milk). As you head out the door, you reach down to grab your colorful reusable grocery bags.

Since Colorado banned the distribution of single-use plastic bags in stores and retail food establishments, grabbing these reusable bags on the way out the door is becoming routine – not just for you, but for all of the residents of a city like Denver, Colo.

Residents here no longer come back from the store with heaps of plastic bags that won't ever be used again. With 711,463 people in the city, that amounts to 211,122,592 fewer single-use plastic bags. Bag bans like this one have [reduced plastic bag litter](#) by 33% or more and encouraged the use of more sustainable options.

Bag bans work. Better yet? People are quickly getting used to them. But what would Denver look like without a plastic bag ban?

State-wide bans effectively reduce plastic waste

On the other side of the Rockies, a state-wide ban on single-use plastic bags does not yet exist in Utah. Instead, a patchwork of local bag bans across the state means that while folks in Park City have a ban, people in Salt Lake City do not.

In Salt Lake City, that means millions of single-use plastic bags continue to be peeled open and filled at the checkout lane every year. Worried that the check-out bags are too thin to get that gallon of milk to your car? Don't worry, they'll double-bag it.

Each plastic bag here in Salt Lake City, Utah, has a short-lived utility: They're only of use for the time it takes to get from the store to your door. After that, they're destined to pollute our environment for centuries to come.

Every year, the 204,657 people in Salt Lake City use enough plastic bags to stretch 10,517 miles when laid side to side.

A single-use plastic bag ban in Salt Lake City would make a difference: Over 60 million fewer bags would end up polluting our environment and 305,315 gallons of oil would be kept in the ground. Better yet? If Utah passed a state-wide ban on single-use plastic bags, over a billion bags would be saved each year.

Why should we ban plastic bags?

Single-use plastic bags are wasteful and harmful to both the environment and our health. Sea turtles, fish, birds and marine mammals often mistake them for food. And they make up a large portion of the hundreds of thousands of pounds of trash that finds its way into our parks, waterways and beaches every year.

Expand plastic bag bans

People know a common-sense solution when they see one, so it's no wonder that cities and states across the nation are moving to ban wasteful single-use plastics. Our national network has helped pass plastic bag bans in 11 states across the U.S. – but we're not stopping there.

We're doing all we can to ban or reduce the worst single-use plastics at every level of government, and even within some of America's biggest retail giants. Policymakers should adopt strong bans on single-use plastic bags to minimize plastic waste, and they should close loopholes that weaken the effectiveness of existing bans.

With millions of tons of new plastic waste being generated each year, we need to continue moving beyond plastic. Bag by bag, state by state, we need to continue to work for a better world: One with less litter and less waste.

We need to move beyond single-use plastics

If we want to reduce plastic waste, we need to get rid of the plastic bag. Target should eliminate plastic bags at checkout nationwide to reduce plastic waste, cut down on litter and build a cleaner, greener future.

