

ALASKA LEGISLATURE COMMITTEE FILES 2007-2008 SL&C 12620

**Senate Bill 118 and House Bill 230: "Plastic bag fee; Establish Litter Fund" --**

**We are in favor of these bills because non-biodegradable plastic bags pose a threat to Alaska's tourism, our fisheries, and our health and are an unsustainable use of dwindling oil resources. These bills will provide consumers with an incentive to reduce their plastic bags use and at the same time establish a fund to cleanup and recycle litter and marine debris.**

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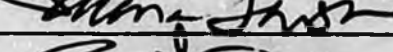


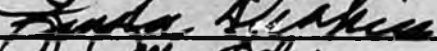

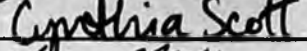

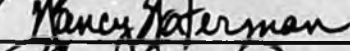

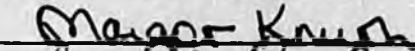
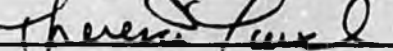
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**Senate Bill 118 and House Bill 230: "Plastic bag fee: Establish Litter Fund" -**

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**Senate Bill 116 and House Bill 230: "Plastic bag fee; Establish Litter Fund" -**

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Ray Champion		1337 Haines, AK	524-0076
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:			









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99654

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Howell Powder	<i>[Signature]</i>	87292 Blue Mountain Rd Palmer	376-4379

99645

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Rachel Lyons	<i>Rachel Lyons</i>		
Zoi Sappi	<i>Zoi Sappi</i>		
Vicki S. Oran	<i>Vicki S. Oran</i>	Hering, AK	
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We, the undersigned, support Senate Bill 118 and House Bill 230 that call for a \$.15 tax on plastic bags in Alaska. The world consumes over a million plastic bags each minute. Plastic bags are an unnecessary, but easily cured, cancer on our landscape and poison in our oceans. They are easily seen by anyone, anytime, anywhere, polluting our landscape and clogging our homes, causing degradation, becoming instruments of death. In the ocean, millions and millions of them have broken down into minute particles that ultimately threaten our food supply. Unlike many other aspects of our fossil fuel consumption, the elimination of plastic bags will have no effect on our ways of life and can be easily accomplished in a very short period of time. It is time Alaska began to lead the way.

The tax on plastic bags introduced in Ireland in 2002 has reduced consumption by 90%--- that's around one billion bags and 4.8 million gallons of oil saved each year. We support this very simple way of saving our atmosphere from the carbon emissions and other toxins intrinsic to their manufacture and transport from location to location, as well as the incalculable cost the bags themselves represent in our environment.

We don't need them. We don't want them.

Please support these bills. Please act now.

Carrie L. Dedrick

Yvonne Bane

Kenyon Williams

Anna White

Shelley Brynjarsen

Nadine Carbone

Geralee Green

Ken Foster

Carrie Voss

Johnnie Hankins

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Box 36 Talkeetna

Box 348 Denali 99755

Box 477 TALKEETNA 99676

Box 477 " "

Box 309 talkeetna

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Michael Roe  
James Chapman  
DR. David N. Dearman  
Tome Rudis  
John Kenny  
CHAR PESTER  
ED CRAVER  
Sarah Crepeau  
Jean Hartman  
Frances Christensen  
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Rohini Song

Walt Fisher

Chad Smith

Steph

Kristine Noto

RBS Moore

Nancy E...

Kirby Mass...

Rick...

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Jennifer C. Burr

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Name Please support these bills. Please act now.

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Name

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	<u>HC Box 13022, Trapper Creek</u>
	<u>99685</u>

We, the undersigned, support Senate Bill 118 and House Bill 230 that call for a \$.15 tax on plastic bags in Alaska. The world consumes over a million plastic bags each minute. Plastic bags are an unnecessary, but easily cured, cancer on our landscape and poison in our oceans. They are easily seen by anyone, anytime, anywhere, polluting our landscape and clogging our homes, causing degradation, becoming instruments of death. In the ocean, millions and millions of them have broken down into minute particles that ultimately threaten our food supply. Unlike many other aspects of our fossil fuel consumption, the elimination of plastic bags will have no effect on our ways of life and can be easily accomplished in a very short period of time. It is time Alaska began to lead the way.

The tax on plastic bags introduced in Ireland in 2002 has reduced consumption by 90%--- that's around one billion bags and 4.8 million gallons of oil saved each year. We support this very simple way of saving our atmosphere from the carbon emissions and other toxins intrinsic to their manufacture and transport from location to location, as well as the incalculable cost the bags themselves represent in our environment.

We don't need them. We don't want them.

Please support these bills. Please act now.

Name

Address

Mary Glavao

BARBARA Holmes

KJ Farley

Randy Bezelle

Laura Caillat

Kathi Wiers

Emilia Pechel

Christa Thompson

Eleanor Lotuoff

Kristen J. Friesen

Corinne Smith

Cheryl Smith

Trey Smiley

JOHN SAILP

Talkeetna AK

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PO Box 12 Denali Park AK 99755

6634 Round Tree Dr Anchorage AK 99507

P.O. Box 991 Talkeetna 99676

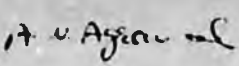
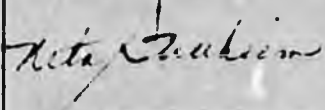

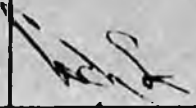


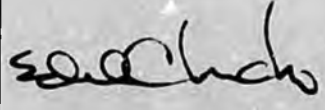
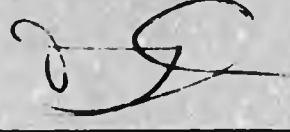

Box 315 Talkeetna AK 99676

PO 326 TAlKEETNA AK 99676

## PETITION

### Senate Bill 118 and House Bill 230: "Plastic Bag Fee; Marine Debris Litter Fund"

We are in favor of these bills because non-biodegradable plastic bags pose a threat to Alaska's tourism, fisheries, and health and are an unsustainable use of dwindling oil resources. These bills will provide consumers with an incentive to reduce their plastic bag use and at the same time establish a fund to clean up and recycle litter and marine debris.

Name	Signature	Address	Email and/or Phone
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Vicky Fern		2310 Wainwright North Pole AK	907-361-9134
Philip Schum		361 Jeanne Dr Fairbanks, AK	907-458-2473
Vickie Kelly		766 WANDA DR NORTH POLE	907-490-4451
Edward Chacho		1136 Chase Ridge Fairbanks AK 99709	907-479-3722
CLIFF GIBBER		2076 5th Dr North Pole AK	907-490-2215
Trevor White		P.O. Box 5645 Fairbanks, AK 99709	907-458-8314

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We are in favor of this bill because non-biodegradable plastic bags pose a threat to Alaska's tourism, fisheries, and health and are an unsustainable use of dwindling oil resources. This bill will provide consumers with an incentive to reduce their plastic bag use and at the same time establish a fund to clean up and recycle litter and marine debris.

Name	Signature	Address	Email and/or Phone
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Jeanne Ackerman	Jeanne Lickeman	2990 Glacierwood Juneau, AK 99801	789-0974
Linda <del>Linda</del> Cryan	Linda Cryan	1822 North A/69	780-4369
Louisa Hayes	Louisa Hayes	Box 35556 Juneau, AK 99803	321-4918
Janet Henderson	Janet Henderson	8490 Duman Juneau, AK 99801	789-7932
Clif Arnold	Clif Arnold	P.O. Box 210086 Auke Bay AK 99821	789-1617
Bronze Ickes	Bronze Ickes	4461 Montrose Dr. Juneau.	780-6467
MARTY Phelan	Marty Phelan	4461 Montrose Dr. Juneau	780-6467
Burt Vander Gt	Burt Vander Gt		776-8842

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Wes Walker	<i>Wes Walker</i>	3800 Melrose	790-2425
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Karla Bush	<i>Karla Bush</i>	9440 N. Douglas Juneau 99802	kgbush@gmail.com
Jennifer Watson	<i>Jenny Watson</i>	3196th Street Juneau, AK 99802	jsa1jfi@hotmail.com
NANCY E HILBERT	<i>Nancy E. Hilbert</i>	3062 MOUNTAINWOOD CIRCLE	rhilbert@ sci.110t

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Sally Donatton	<i>S. Donatton</i>	530 Park St. JUN	586-5624
wendy Parker	<i>wendy Park</i>	9350 N. Douglas Hwy	
NANCY SCHAE	<i>Nancy Schae</i>	SEAGWAY, AK	612-0281
Cora Brunette	<i>Cora Brunette</i>	3530 Glacier Hwy Juneau.	790-2824
Sandra Benzell	<i>Sandra Benzell</i>	P.O. Box 34926 Juneau AK 99803	796-2037
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MARTIN NIEMI	<i>Martin Niemi</i>	616 ALTA CI. DOUGLAS, AK 99824	789-2064

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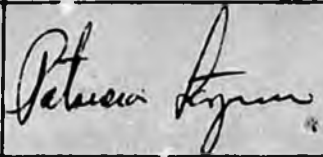

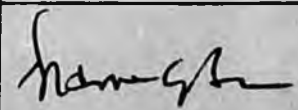

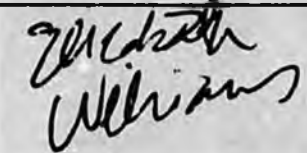
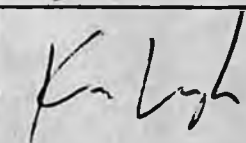

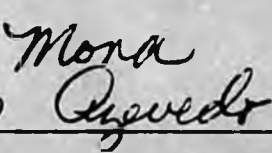
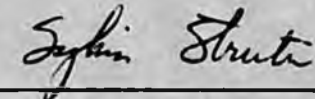

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### Senate Bill 118: "Plastic Bag Fee; Marine Debris Litter Fund"

We are in favor of this bill because non-biodegradable plastic bags pose a threat to Alaska's tourism, fisheries, and health and are an unsustainable use of dwindling oil resources. This bill will provide consumers with an incentive to reduce their plastic bag use and at the same time establish a fund to clean up and recycle litter and marine debris.

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Sander Schipen		610 W 11th Juneau,	723-0991
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Derek Thompson		9184 James Blvd. #6 Juneau, AK 99801	
David Jib		160 Behrens Ave	

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Name	Signature	Address	Email and/or Phone
Steve Parker	<i>Steve Parker</i>	15485 Glacier Hwy	789-4850
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CAROL SMITH	<i>Carol Smith</i>	515 Laurel DR Douglas	
Marie Greenly		5512 Douglas	780-4345
BUTCH LAUBMAN	<i>Butch Laubman</i>	9604 Kelly Ct	790-2120
Sarah Dunlap	<i>Sarah Dunlap</i>	9604 Kelly Ct	790-2120
Lora Mallinger	<i>Lora Mallinger</i>	4320 Glacier Hwy	780-4555
VERONICA STEVENS	<i>Veronica L. Stevens</i>	2481 O'Day Dr.	723-4906
Frank Stevens	FRANK STEVENS	2481 O'DAY DR.	586-0393
Amy Gaistford	<i>Amy E Gaistford</i>	232 Meadow Ln	523-0605

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Name	Signature	Address	Email and/or Phone
Justin Johnson	<i>Justin Johnson</i>	7329 Haddock Ln	533-0605
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Dave Edwards	<i>[Signature]</i>	26 211 38406 Seward AK 99803	500 9089
Jade Bickmore	<i>Jade Bickmore</i>	8544 Steep Pl. Juneau 99801	789-8449
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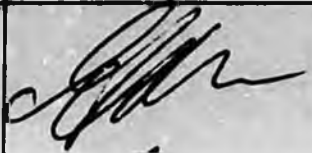
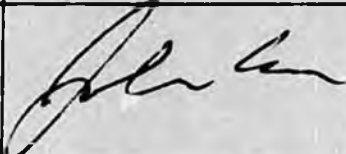
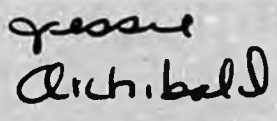
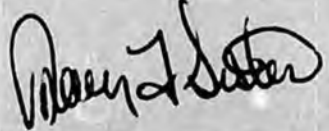
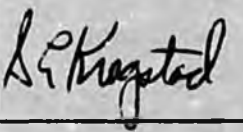

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Pilar Scott		1045 Silver St Juneau AK 99801	(907) 789-1516
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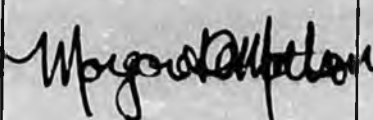
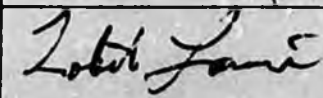
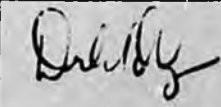
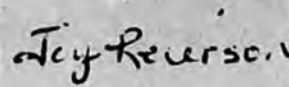



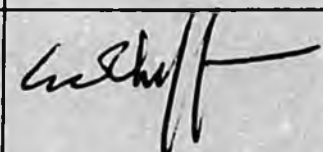

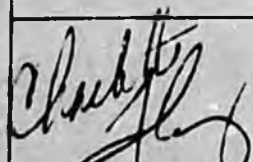
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Robert Laurie		5270 North Douglas Juneau	586-6681
DONALD		3780 Hillside Juneau	723-3977
Joy Reiersen		9951 Stephen Richards #71 Juneau, AK	789-1284
DENNIS MATHERS		8007 Poppy Ct Juneau AK	789-9009
Angela Miller		305 B ST Douglas, AK 99824	364-2326
Isabel Bush		320 W. 8th St. Juneau, AK 99801	586-3708
Tran Shuff		1800 Northwood Dr L-92 Juneau AK	tran-yk@ymail.com
Robert Bereman		Po Box 32839	
		3000 Mendenhall Juneau	583 7774

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Nancy Masses	<i>Nancy Masses</i>	2526 SCOTT JUNEAN	789-6142
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Richard Mattson	<i>Richard Mattson</i>	1027 Arctic Circle Juneau, AK 99801	789-5490

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For more information visit [www.turningthetides.org](http://www.turningthetides.org) or call 907-723-0789.

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### Senate Bill 118: "Plastic Bag Fee; Marine Debris Litter Fund"

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VALERIE KELTON	Val Kelton	9375 N. Douglas Hwy 99804	valkegi.net
Sandi Branum Veeraya	V Branum	4436 Wood DUCK 99801	firecool21@ yahoo
Christy Kelihoomalua	Christy M. Kelihoomalua	PO Box 33256 Juneau, AK 99803	CSmithak@aol.net
PHILIP STEWART	Phil Stewart	P.O. Box 210112 AUKER BAY, AK 99824	h. 463-3257 c. 321-2122
Joshua Adams	Josh Adams	167 So. Franklin Juneau, AK 99801	723-2241
Larry Rorem LARRY ROREM	Larry Rorem	2800 D Peters Lane	586-6452
Aaron Rorem	Aaron Rorem	2800 D Peters Lane	723 2561
Laura Rorem	Laura Rorem	2800 D Peters Ln	586-6452

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Juneau AK 99801.

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Kristin Wright	<i>Kristin Wright</i>	3980 W Douglas Hwy Juneau, AK 99801	wright@alaska.net
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Tina McBrown	<i>Tina McBrown</i>	19400 Beardsley Way Juneau 99801	Zetobridgeton@ad.com
Greg R. Beaman	<i>Greg Beaman</i>	19400 Beardsley Way Juneau 99801	
Fritz Moser	<i>Fritz Moser</i>	3466 RICHARDS	
Stonor Carpenter	<i>Stonor Carpenter</i>	2510 Douglas Hwy Juneau, AK 99801	honorcarpenter@yahoo.com
Joe Kiser	<i>Joe Kiser</i>	2510 Douglas Hwy Juneau	635-1560
Nicole Clark	<i>Nicole Clark</i>	PO BOX 35173 Juneau AK 99803	nicoleackark@gmail.com

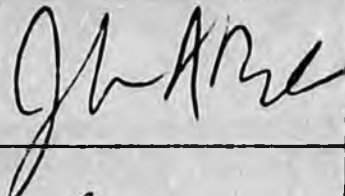
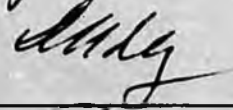
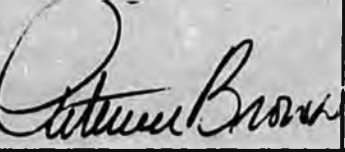
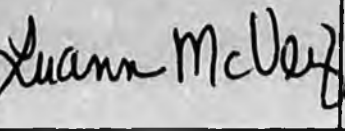
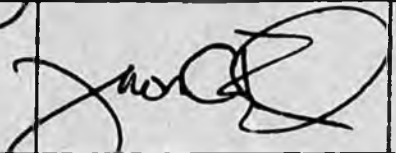

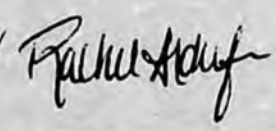
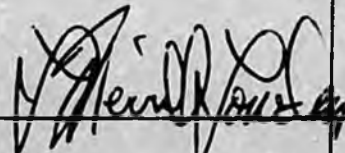
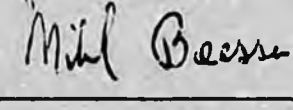

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L. Merrill London		2300 Old # LAWSON CREEK BAY Douglas AK	WORK 586-1400
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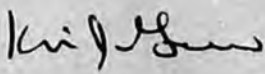


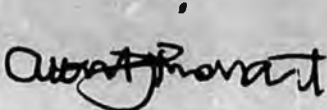


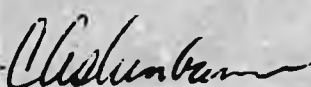
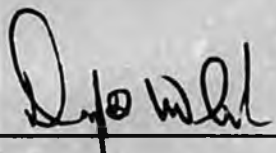
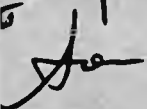
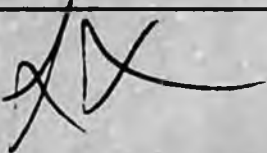
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Name	Signature	Address	Email and/or Phone
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Albert Rinehart		3211 Tongass Blvd Juneau, AK 99801	523-7733
Nila Rinehart		3211 Tongass Blvd Juneau, AK 99801	
Tom Dawson		8120 Pinewood Dr Juneau - 99801	
Chris Ashenbrenner		4035 N. Douglas Hwy Juneau, AK 99801	
Doug Whelan		9353 Center Ct Juneau AK 9980	
Sean C. McLean		PO BOX 33698 Juneau AK 99803 3698	
Lori Merritt		10 Box 210886 Anchorage AK 99521	

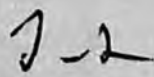
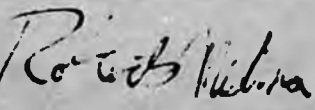

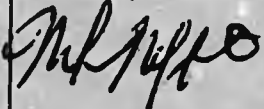

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Name	Signature	Address	Email and/or Phone
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Mike M. Bob		PO Box 32464 Juneau AK 99803	907-789-9366
Arita Moffitt		PO Box 32464 Juneau, AK 99803	(907) 789-9366
Laura Vandenberg		P.O. Box 20863 Juneau, AK	907-209-7204
Mike Vandenberg		PO Box 20863 Juneau AK 99803	907 209 7204


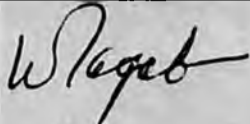
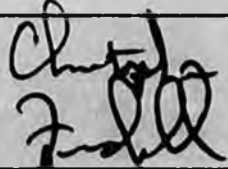
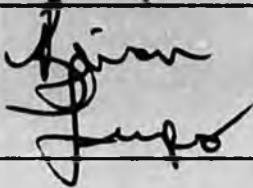
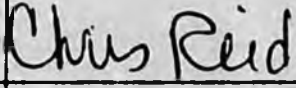
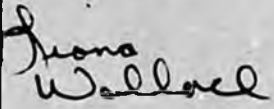
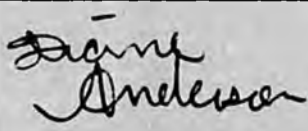
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Christopher Fredell		POB 33803 Juneau, AK 99803	islands@ptialaska.net
BRIAN LULLO Brian Lullo		Box 240114 99821 DOUGLAS AK	
Chris Reid		8309 ASPEN AVE Juneau AK 99801	723-4555
Liana Wallace		4407 Columbia Blvd. Juneau, AK 99801	789-3269
Diane Anderson		2201 B Meadow Lane Juneau, AK 99801	586-3085

Please mail completed form to Turning the Tides, 230 South Franklin Street, Suite 911, Juneau AK 99801.

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**Paula Cadiente**

---

**From:** Sen. Johnny Ellis  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 04, 2007 8:39 AM  
**To:** Russ Lindsay  
**Subject:** RE: sb 118

Thx for sharing your insights, Russ.

---

**From:** Russ Lindsay [mailto:russlindsay26@hotmail.com]  
**Sent:** Monday, April 02, 2007 9:24 AM  
**To:** Sen. Johnny Ellis  
**Subject:** sb 118

Dear Senator Ellis,

This is in response to SB 118 (disposable plastic bag fee) that was introduced by Senator Elton of Juneau. I am one of the employee owners of Swansons in Bethel. We also have N&N Market in Dillingham, Togiak Trading in Togiak, Yukon Traders in St. Mary's, and Park's Place in Glennallen. And I speak for the other employee owners in voicing our opposition to this proposed fee.

We believe this bill would place an unnecessary burden on retailers in terms of record keeping and collecting; as well as added expense to residents in bush communities.

As a group (Omni Enterprises, Inc) we have taken a different approach in solving this environmental dilemma. The plastic carry bags that our stores use are oxo-biodegradable in that they break down in a landfill in only two years (Safeway bags break down in 100 years). We found a company in Spokane, Wa. that supplies us with these eco-friendly bags. I have attached some info on these bags.

Two decades ago plastic bags started replacing paper bags to save our forests and some freight costs. Now communities are discovering the downside to these bags. We believe the bags that Omni stores are using (oxo-biodegradable) offers the perfect compromise. If this bill was to pass (we still oppose it) could you amend it to exempt these environmental friendly bags?

One last question about this bill: How will food stamp clients be treated? Will the fee be foodstamp-able or would these customers have to come up with the money to buy the bags? Food stamp clients make up a large portion of our customer base and we are curious of the effect on them.

Thanks for reading our opinions, and for your service.

Sincerely,  
Russell Lindsay VP  
Omi Enterprises, Inc.  
907-344-4882

03/26/08

The Honorable Johnny Ellis  
Labor and Commerce Committee

Re: Support for SB 118

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

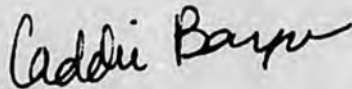
Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of SB 118.

In our communities across Alaska, we are faced with the problem of high amounts of plastic consumption. This is a problem because plastic does not biodegrade, it photodegrades. This means that the plastic breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces, which eventually leech into the environment. The plastic can also be very harmful to water sources.

I come from the town of Petersburg where our lives are based on fishing, and we completely rely on having clean water to support the sealife. The increasing consumption and pollution of plastic is becoming a worrying problem for our community. If the fish ingest too many toxic plastic particles, they will be poisoned and die, and with them, our industry and way of life. As a high school student, I am concerned for the sustainability of our oceans for my generation and the ones after me.

By supporting SB 118, you will be able to directly influence the reduction of plastic in our state. Instituting a small tax on disposable plastic bags will reduce the amount of unnecessary plastic being consumed and then thrown away to pollute our state. Already many villages and individual stores across Alaska have created a fee or even completely banned these bags in support of creating a cleaner and more sustainable Alaska. While this bill will not completely solve the problem of plastic pollution, this would be an important and pioneering step towards helping keep Alaska clean for my own generation and those to follow. Please consider this bill for the good of Alaskans and our beautiful, unique environment.

Thank you for your time and for your continuous commitment to our state.



Caddie Bergren  
Petersburg, Alaska  
Age 17

(907) 772-9949  
PO Box 1069  
PETERSBURG, AK 99833



## News Release

For Immediate Release:

March 26, 2008

Contact: Lisa Harrison (703) 741-5810 or David Vermillion (212) 704-4576

Email: [lisa\\_harrison@americanchemistry.com](mailto:lisa_harrison@americanchemistry.com) or [david.vermillion@edelman.com](mailto:david.vermillion@edelman.com)

# U.S. Sets Record for Plastic Bags and Film Recycling in 2006

## Recycling Rate Increases 24% in 2006, Continued Growth Expected

Arlington, Va. March 26, 2008- Plastic bags and film recycling increased significantly across the U.S. in 2006, reaching a record high and validating a growing national recycling trend sweeping the states. The dramatic increase in recycling is in part driven by greater demand for recycled plastic and increased recycling of plastic grocery bags.

An estimated 812,010,000 pounds of post-consumer film (including plastic bags) was recovered in 2006, according to the 2006 National Post-Consumer Recycled Plastic Bags and Film Report conducted by Moore Recycling Associates, Inc. of Sonoma, California. This represents a 24% increase from 652,477,000 pounds recovered in 2005.

"More Americans are recycling plastic bags and film than ever before, driven by a growing recognition that plastic is a valuable resource—too valuable to waste," said Steve Russell, managing director for ACC's Plastics Division. "Working with retailers, recyclers and communities around the country, the ACC is working to promote plastic recycling and drive even higher rates for the future. Plastic bags can be recycled into many valuable products, including durable decking and new bags."

"Over the past several years, Trex has processed and used a tremendous amount of recycled plastic and that demand has led us to partner with the public and private sector on innovative recycling programs," said Dave Heglas of TREX, a northern Virginia company that uses recycled plastic bags to manufacture green building materials. "We have recycled over 2.5 billion pounds of plastic over the last 10 years into lumber substitutes for outdoor decks."

The value of recycled plastic is leading to new innovations in the bag industry too. Hilex Poly, a leading plastic bag manufacturer, established a program that recycles old bags into new ones called Bag-2-Bag®. The program encourages consumers to return their used bags back to the store and then the store and Hilex do the rest. Last year Hilex's work with consumers and stores recycled the equivalent of 400 million bags and reduced the use of new material by 8 million pounds.

This increase in recycling is expected to continue or accelerate, in large part due to the greater prevalence of plastic bag recycling; and as more retailers set up bag collection programs. California's 2007 at-store plastic bag recycling mandate and a similar measure in New York City will fuel continued recycling growth. Similar measures are also being considered by other localities across the nation. Consumers, businesses and recyclers can find a wealth of information on plastic bag recycling at [www.plasticbagrecycling.org](http://www.plasticbagrecycling.org).

A survey of 2007 recycling is underway and the report is expected toward the conclusion of this year.

Copies of the full report are available at [Americanchemistry.com/plastics](http://Americanchemistry.com/plastics)

###

[www.americanchemistry.com/newsroom](http://www.americanchemistry.com/newsroom)

The American Chemistry Council (ACC) represents the leading companies engaged in the business of chemistry. ACC members apply the science of chemistry to make innovative products and services that make people's lives better, healthier and safer. ACC is committed to improved environmental, health and safety performance through Responsible Care®, common sense advocacy designed to address major public policy issues, and health and environmental research and product testing. The business of chemistry is a \$635 billion enterprise and a key element of the nation's economy. It is one of the nation's largest exporters, accounting for ten cents out of every dollar in U.S. exports. Chemistry companies are among the largest investors in research and development. Safety and security have always been primary concerns of ACC members, and they have intensified their efforts, working closely with government agencies to improve security and to defend against any threat to the nation's critical infrastructure.

**Dana Owen**

---

**From:** Sen. Johnny Ellis  
**Sent:** Monday, April 30, 2007 10:37 AM  
**To:** Dana Owen  
**Subject:** FW: Senate Bill 118  
**Attachments:** HPIM2292.JPG

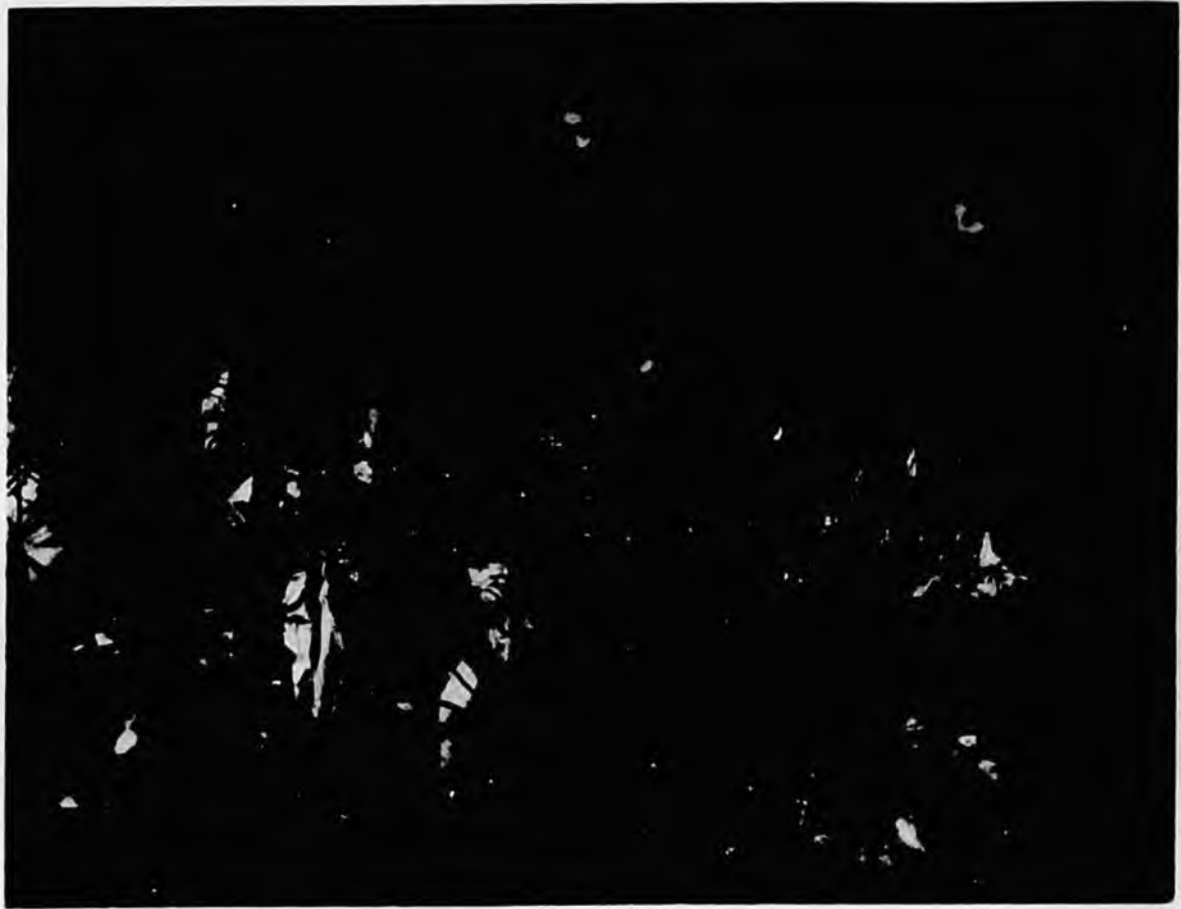
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**From:** William Donaldson [mailto:wdonaldson1@hotmail.com]  
**Sent:** Monday, April 30, 2007 10:21 AM  
**To:** Sen. Johnny Ellis  
**Subject:** Senate Bill 118

I urge you to support Senate Bill 118. Since 1 picture = 1000 words, I have attached a picture which shows the problem on Kodiak Island. Please distribute this to all members.

Thank You

4/30/2007



**NewsBank Inc. America's Newspapers**

**Paper:** Anchorage Daily News (AK)

**Title:** Towns bag 'Paper or plastic?' query -

**In some parts of rural Alaska, grocery bags are outlawed before they become airborne trash.**

**Date:** May 2, 2003

Outside the Western Alaska village of Emmonak, white plastic shopping bags used to start appearing 15 miles from town. They blew out of the dump and rolled across the tundra like tumbleweeds. In Galena, they snagged in the trees and drifted into the Yukon River. Outside Kotlik, on the Yukon Delta, bags were found tangled around salmon and seals.

No more. All three villages banned the bags.

"It's working out good here," said Peter Captain Sr., chief of the tribal council in Galena, where the city banned stores from using plastic bags in 1998. "You used to find plastic bags all over the place, up in the trees. ... But you don't see that now."

At least 30 communities statewide have banned plastic bags. They have joined a growing list of places around the world that decided the bags' nuisance outweighs their convenience. Ireland and Taiwan started taxing bags to curtail their use. South Africa banned them completely, as did Bangladesh after devastating floods were attributed to stray plastic bags blocking drains.

In Alaska, the expansion of bag bans shows no signs of slowing down. Other communities are now considering prohibitions, including the biggest city off the road system, Bethel.

"They're horrible. They're all over," said Bethel City Councilman Jerry Drake. Once, he said, driving to the airport outside town, "in a one-mile stretch I counted over 200 bags." Looking out his living room window earlier this week, he counted a dozen.

In Bethel as elsewhere, plastic bags flutter out of trash bins or ravens peck them loose. They drift and lodge in bushes and trees, dot the roadsides and collect on the trackless tundra.

Several years ago, Bethel public works director Clair Grifka said he looked out his office window and saw an enormous flock of snow geese. Then he realized it was 800 to 1,000 errant bags.

Drake's proposal would ban Bethel stores but not restaurants from using plastic bags, essentially requiring them to use paper. Elsewhere, shoppers have been encouraged to provide their own canvas or nylon bags, though in some paper-only villages, shoppers hoard plastic bags and reuse them, village officials have said. Violating the Bethel ban could cost up to \$500.

The Bethel council largely supports the proposed ban, members said this week. Public hearings later this month will gauge local opinion, but Drake and other people believe the council will put the decision before Bethel voters in October. Drake said he's sure it will be approved.

"In my four years on the council, I've never heard people talk to me like this" about any other community issue, he said.

One reason it's such a hot topic is that the council approved a ban two years ago only to see a voter initiative repeal the measure months later. This time, the ban will stick, Drake predicts.

"The only reason it got repealed was that it was a poorly written ballot measure, where yes meant no and no meant yes," he said. "I had to read the ballot about three times before I realized what was going on with it, and I knew all about it."

Others say that banning plastic bags is the wrong way to solve Bethel's trash problem. Restaurant owner Yolanda Jorgensen sponsored the repeal initiative two years ago and said she'll work to defeat the ban again this fall. There are many angles to attack, she said.

Paper bags cost more to buy and ship to Western Alaska and take up more storage space, a precious commodity for many businesses, Jorgensen said. They're weak when wet and are hard to carry. And plastic can be recycled but the City Council isn't talking about that, she said.

Jorgensen doesn't dispute they're ugly but added, "There are a lot more things littering our tundra than plastic bags."

Many of Bethel's bags bear the distinctive logo of Alaska Commercial Co., the biggest store in town. Manager David Hicks said the store will abide by the community's vote, but he fears that Bethel's poor will suffer most if plastic bags vanish.

"It'll make a difference to the people that have to walk a lot," he said, which includes many of the city's residents and visitors. Bethel is a city, not a tiny village, Hicks said. "It's very difficult to walk home with more than a night's worth of groceries in a paper bag, whereas you can walk home with quite a bit in a plastic bag."

Banning plastic wasn't easy in Emmonak or Galena, officials said, and attempts in other villages have failed because plastic bags have loyal fans. Last year in Alakanuk, the City Council decided against a ban because of the bags' utility, said village planner Stephanie Ayunerak. Not only are they more convenient for carrying groceries, "they make good freezer bags," she recalled council members saying.

Ban supporters, however, can point to places like Galena. The Yukon River village also feared losing its plastic bags, but according to Huhndorf's Store owner Max Huhndorf, "it's worked out OK. It took a little bit of adjustment, but we did it."

The additional cost hasn't been an issue, because people started using canvas bags and the store's empty cardboard boxes, he said.

"A lot of people will put their stuff under their arm and carry it home. They say, 'We don't want a bag.' It still costs us more (for paper bags), but in the long run it's for the best," Huhndorf said.

In Emmonak, the village corporation store pays a nickel for each paper bag returned, said Albert Westlock of the tribal council.

"You see a whole bunch of little kids making money after (retrieving) those paper bags."

If the bag bans spread, there may soon be a bounty for plastic bags too. Bill Stokes, the rural environmental specialist for the Department of Environmental Conservation, promotes recycling plastic bags into valuable crafts using nothing more than a size 8 crochet hook.

He first saw the method practiced in Mekoryuk in 1993, but it has spread statewide. People cut plastic bags into strips, then crochet them into backpacks, handbags, sweat bath mats and baskets, some with ornate Yup'ik or Tlingit designs.

"It's nothing short of miraculous," he said.

It can be lucrative too. Shoulder bags have sold for as much as \$300 and often fetch \$50, he said.

Nevertheless, Stokes still encourages bag bans, and the philosophy seems to be spreading, he said.

"Village by village by village, they're just really tired of them."

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Caption:

Bob Hallinen / Anchorage Daily News

At least 30 Alaska communities have banned plastic shopping bags because of trash problems like this.

Caption:

Graphic 1: Quote marks\_050203.eps

Graphic 2: PlasticBagTrash\_050203.eps

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Section: Main

Page: A1

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Published on Wednesday, July 21, 2004 by the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*

## Plastic Left Holding the Bag as Environmental Plague

Nations around world look at a ban  
by Joan Lowy

Imagine a world without plastic shopping bags. It could be the future.

There is a growing international movement to ban or discourage the use of plastic bags because of their environmental effects. Countries from Ireland to Australia are cracking down on the bags and action is beginning to stir in the United States.

The ubiquitous plastic shopping bag, so handy for everything from toting groceries to disposing of doggie doo, may be a victim of its own success. Although plastic bags didn't come into widespread use until the early 1980s, environmental groups estimate that 500 billion to 1 trillion of the bags are now used worldwide every year.

Critics of the bags say they use up natural resources, consume energy to manufacture, create litter, choke marine life and add to landfill waste.

"Every time we use a new plastic bag they go and get more petroleum from the Middle East and bring it over in tankers," said Stephanie Barger, executive director of Earth Resource Foundation in Costa Mesa, Calif. "We are extracting and destroying the Earth to use a plastic bag for 10 minutes."

The foundation is calling for a 25 cent tax on plastic bags in California.

A bill that would have imposed a 3 cent tax on plastic shopping bags and cups was sidelined in the California Legislature last year after heavy opposition from the retail and plastics industries.

The plastics industry took a "proactive stance" by working with retailers to encourage greater recycling, rather than "putting on taxes to address the problem," said Donna Dempsey, executive director of the Film and Bag Federation, a trade association for the plastic bag industry.

The tax proposals are loosely modeled on Ireland's "PlasTax," a levy of about 20 cents that retail customers have had to pay for each plastic bag since March 2002. The use of plastic bags in Ireland dropped more than 90 percent following imposition of the tax, and the

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### Bags add tons to state landfills; recycling comes up short

Every year in Washington state, people throw away about 270,000 tons of plastic bags and wrappings.

That's nearly 5 percent of all garbage going to landfills and incinerators in the state, according to Gretchen Newman, recycling coordinator for the state Department of Ecology.

And plastic bags are a major part of Washington's litter problem, cluttering streets, sticking to trees and polluting water, she said, adding, "It's dangerous for wildlife."

Despite the lightness of their weight, plastic bags and wrappings made up 3 percent of the volume of all litter on state roads and in state and county parks in 2000, the last year tracked by the state, according to an Ecology report. That's 283 tons of bag litter statewide.

Seattle and Bellevue are among the larger cities that collect plastic bags for recycling. In 2001 and 2002, Seattle residents recycled 287 tons of plastic packaging, said Brett Stav of Seattle Public Utilities.

But not everyone bothers to recycle, and in 2002 nearly 5,000 tons of plastic bags went to Seattle's landfill, he said.

King, Pierce and Snohomish counties do not offer plastic bag recycling to their unincorporated-area residents. Although Brooke Bascom of King County's solid waste agency blamed the market, saying there's not enough demand for recycled bags, Seattle's Stav said, "China is a huge developing market. ... There's not a problem with demand." The used bags are