



Budget Priority

PLASTIC BAG BAN AND BOTTLE BILL EXPANSION

PROBLEM

Increasingly, municipalities within New York State and around the world are adopting measures to reduce plastic bag consumption and promote recycling. Plastic bags litter our environment, endanger wildlife, jam equipment at recycling facilities, and leach chemicals into our food and water. In December 2017, the Governor's Plastic Bag Task Force released a report that outlines eight potential courses of action to reduce plastic bag pollution. The report's recommendations range from strengthening and enforcing the existing New York State Plastic Bag Reduction, Reuse, and Recycling Act to implementing a ban or fee on single-use bags.

Another material that poses problems for municipal materials recovery facilities (MRFs) is glass. Glass is difficult for municipalities to recycle because, when it breaks, it contaminates the recycling stream and wrecks the machinery in processing plants. Expanding the New York State Returnable Container Act ("Bottle Bill") to include additional glass receptacles would reduce contamination and save MRFs money.

EXECUTIVE BUDGET PROPOSAL

Governor Cuomo's Executive Budget includes a statewide plastic bag prohibition to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions associated with plastic bag production and disposal. The State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) will work with stakeholders and community leaders to ensure the roll-out of the ban does not disproportionately impact low- and moderate-income communities. This outreach will include reusable bags giveaways and exemptions, where appropriate.

The Executive Budget also includes a proposal to make most non-alcoholic beverage containers eligible for five-cent redemption. This will include sports drinks, energy drinks, fruit and vegetable beverages, and ready-to-drink teas and coffee. Exceptions will be provided for bottles containing dairy milk, milk substitutes, infant formula, syrups and flavorings, medical prescriptions, and dietary supplements.

COUNTY RECOMMENDATION

Counties support a ban on plastic bags. Counties oppose the proposed Bottle Bill expansion, as it is projected to result in a \$10 million loss of curbside bin value statewide. This comes at a time when declining paper values have already cost local recycling programs more than \$40 million. Instead of adding non-alcoholic beverage containers to the Bottle Bill, we urge the State to add a deposit to all glass beverage containers, including wine and liquor bottles, glass hard cider bottles, and non-alcoholic glass beverage containers in order to increase glass recycling, reduce municipal recycling costs, and reduce glass contamination in the curbside recycling stream.

For more information on the county position regarding this issue, visit www.nysac.org or call 518-465-1473 to speak to Alex LaMonte, Research Analyst.