

NO. R-330. JOINT RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE HANOVER HIGH SCHOOL KIDS FOR A COOLER PLANET REUSABLE SHOPPING BAG CAMPAIGN.

(J.R.H.51)

Offered by: Representatives Cheney of Norwich, Barnard of Richmond, Chen of Mendon, Clarkson of Woodstock, Clerkin of Hartford, Evans of Essex, Martin of Springfield, Martin of Wolcott, Masland of Thetford, Mitchell of Barnard, Ojibway of Hartford, Pellett of Chester, Shand of Weathersfield and Sweaney of Windsor

Whereas, Kids for a Cooler Planet is a group of environmentally concerned and savvy students at Hanover High School (whose student body includes Vermonters from Norwich and other Windsor and Orange County communities) who have started an ingenious campaign to encourage and promote the use of reusable shopping bags, and

Whereas, the environmental cost of using nonreusable shopping bags, either plastic or paper, is staggering, and

Whereas, the average American family uses approximately 1,000 disposable bags per year, and in 2005, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimated that only five percent of plastic bags and 10 percent of paper bags are recycled in the United States, and

Whereas, on an annual basis, United States consumers use approximately 100 billion plastic bags whose contents contain the equivalent of 12 million barrels of oil, and

Whereas, plastic bags are not biodegradable but are rather photodegradable because they break up into smaller pieces that can release harmful toxins into the soil and water, and they often end up as litter, causing havoc for humans and for wildlife, especially on Lake Champlain and on the state's many lakes, rivers, and other bodies of water in Vermont, and

Whereas, as detrimental as plastic bags are to our environment, paper bags, despite the widely held belief that they are far more ecologically friendly, are perhaps even worse environmental culprits, generating 70 percent more air and 50 times more water pollutants, and they consume 14 million trees annually, and

Whereas, the Kids for a Cooler Planet's reusable shopping bag campaign does not involve any government funding or regulation, and it is designed both to educate consumers about the problems associated with disposable bags and to use market incentives to encourage the use of more environmentally compatible reusable shopping bags, and

Whereas, this reusable shopping bag campaign was first implemented in Hanover where the students raised money through corporate sponsors to pay for advertisements, posters, and flyers, and

Whereas, in return for a promotional fee, a sponsor's corporate logo was placed on the first production run of the new bags, and

Whereas, the Hanover Selectboard endorsed the project, including authorizing the stringing of a huge banner over Main Street that generated publicity for the endeavor and goodwill for the town, and

Whereas, the project's success in Hanover has been amazing as all 8,000 of the initially ordered bags were sold in one week, and thousands more have been reordered, but the local stores still have trouble keeping the bags in stock, and

Whereas, EPA estimates that reusing a bag only 11 times has a net positive effect on the environment, and

Whereas, the students hope to expand their reusable shopping bag campaign throughout Vermont and New Hampshire, and a similar project in Australia, where plastic bag use was reduced 60 percent in three years, without any government regulation, inspires them to proceed, and

Whereas, one of the students' goals is to introduce, in several Vermont and New Hampshire school districts, a pilot high school study unit that will educate students, and in turn, their parents about the importance of purchasing reusable bags, and a Dartmouth College professor is assisting in this effort, and

Whereas, with the support of the "Change the World Kids," a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit organization, the Hanover High School students hope to air public service announcements on radio and television promoting their reusable shopping bag campaign, and

Whereas, the Kids for a Cooler Planet's reusable shopping bag campaign is an admirable endeavor worthy of a broader audience, now therefore be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly expresses its support of the Hanover High School Kids for a Cooler Planet's reusable shopping bag campaign, and be it further

Resolved: That the secretary of state be directed to send a copy of this resolution to Kids for a Cooler Planet at Hanover High School.