

## Taxes and Bans Don't Work



Banning recyclable plastic bags will not solve the litter problem or reduce the amount of waste in our sewers and landfills. Litter must be addressed directly by targeting behavior and increasing access to recycling bins and waste receptacles.

Product bans often result in shifting one form of litter to another, and such measures only create new problems. After all, there is no such thing as environmentally preferable litter.

The few communities that have chosen to tax or ban the use of plastic grocery bags found that their efforts to help the environment actually had the opposite effect.

- After a 2002 tax on grocery bags in Ireland, consumers actually use 10 percent more plastic bags than they did in Ireland's pre-tax days. [» Learn More](#)
- San Francisco's ban on plastic grocery bags caused shoppers to switch to paper bags, which require 70 percent more energy to manufacture, produce 50 percent more greenhouse gas emissions and create five times more waste than plastic bags.
- Before-and-after litter audits in the City of San Francisco found that litter had not decreased, which was one of the stated purposes of the city's ban. [» Learn More](#)
- A Qualitative Study of Grocery Bags in San Francisco was conducted by the editor of the *Use Less Stuff* Report following the city's bag ban and found that the replacement of plastic with paper bags and the return of double-bagging may actually increase the environmental impact. [» Learn More](#)

Promoting the [recycling of plastic bags](#), rather than taxes or bans, is the best way to decrease litter and conserve valuable resources and energy. Fortunately, the vast majority of communities that have considered measures to address bag waste have opted for programs to increase recycling of this valuable material.

### What to Know About Bag Bans

- Mandating that recyclable plastic bags be replaced with biodegradable or compostable bags will not reduce litter or the amount of waste in our landfills.
- Banning recyclable plastic bags will not reduce society's dependence on oil. In the United States, plastic bags are made primarily (80%) from domestic natural gas, and when recycled, that material is made available for new products.
- Banning recyclable plastic bags or mandating their replacement with compostable bags will diminish efforts to recycle these products.

[Click here](#) to learn more about the myths behind plastic bag bans.