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Editorial

ITEM NO. 1

## Plastic bags are an environmental menace

**L.A.'s delay in banning single-use, carry-out plastic bags has put it behind dozens of other municipalities in the state. With a recycling rate of only 5%, the bags are an environmental menace that we can easily do without.**

April 4, 2012

When the city of Los Angeles held off three years ago on banning single-use, carry-out plastic bags, it missed a chance to be at the forefront of environmentally responsible lawmaking in California. By the time it inexplicably delayed a vote again in December, close to 20 cities as well as Los Angeles County had prohibited stores from providing the bags. And since then, the bags have been banned in more than two dozen additional municipalities in the state.

More important, in the last three years tens of millions of plastic carry-out bags — possibly hundreds of millions — have been distributed in Los Angeles. Statewide, only about 5% of them are generally recycled. They snag on trees and bushes in the wilderness and are washed down waterways to the ocean. They are the second most common trash item found on beaches, and contribute to the giant floating garbage patch in the Pacific.

The City Council's Energy and Environment Committee should waste no more time. It should approve a ban for the full council to consider.

If there has been an upside to the delay, it's that recent talks might produce a more flexible, common-sense ordinance than the one considered in December. That proposal called for banning both plastic and paper bags, but discussions leading up to Wednesday's meeting raised the possibility of one similar to most existing ordinances, which ban plastic but prescribe a fee on paper bags, usually 10 cents apiece. It will take consumers a while to adopt the habit of carrying reusable totes for their groceries and other purchases, and they should have the option of a less environmentally damaging alternative for the times they forget.

The committee's job should be made easier by a ruling last month in Los Angeles County Superior Court in which the judge rejected a legal challenge to the county's bag ban, which applies only to unincorporated areas. The judge ruled that the fee on paper bags was not a tax, as the manufacturer of plastic bags had claimed.

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One complaint from consumers is that they have other uses for the plastic bags, especially to pick up after their dogs. But the ban would affect only the bags with handles that shoppers are commonly given at checkout stands. The smaller bags used to hold vegetables (or this newspaper) are usually recycled or at least disposed of properly, so would not be included in the ordinance, and larger, sturdier trash bags are inexpensive. Cities and even whole nations are doing just fine without the polluting carry-out bags, and so can Los Angeles.

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SUMMARY OF PLASTIC BAG PRODUCTION  
& MANUFACTURERS IN LA COUNTY

- NO plastic grocery bag manufacturers in LA CITY
- There are, however, THREE such manufacturers in LA COUNTY:

1. CROWN-POLY

- located in Vernon & Huntington Park
- 300 employees
- 65% plastic bag production / 35% other goods production
  - i. Of their plastic bag production, 90% of those grocery bags are for use in other parts of the United States, but not here in LA County
  - ii. Meaning – plastic bags in LA City represents only 5% of their total production

2. COMMAND PACKAGING

- located in Vernon
- 250 employees
- “produce some grocery bags but they primarily produce (other bags)...that plastic grocery bags represent a *percentage but not a majority* of their business.”

3. OMEGA EXTRUDING

- located in Compton
- 200 employees
- Combined - there are approximately 750 total direct plastic bag manufacturing jobs in the County
- All 3 manufacturers
  - i. make products in addition to plastic grocery bags.
  - ii. That each of these manufacturers serve clientele across the nation and internationally

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