

# Paper or plastic? Delaware's food industry says reusable

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With the recent passage of the single use plastic bag bill and filing of the grocery paper bag ban there is plenty of reason to set the record straight. Delaware is hoping to be the first state in the country to ban both single use plastic bags and grocery paper bags. There has been plenty of debate over the course of the last decade. Now consideration in the state Legislature could serve as a uniform solution to phase out both single-use disposable plastic and grocery paper bags. The overall goal is to encourage Delawareans to reduce consumption by moving to reusable bags. Leaders in the food industry remain vocal advocates for promoting sustainability and environmental leadership. This is a key tenant of food retailers in DE.. We have learned that many of these ordinances around the country have been focused on disposable plastic bags, but disposable paper bags also have a drastic environmental impact, as well as a higher cost than plastic bags. Paper bags also require 10 times the amount of trucks to deliver the same quantity of bags, resulting in increased truck traffic on our streets, diesel emissions in our air and a negative impact for all involved.

An unintended consequence of passing only a single use plastic bag ban without addressing paper bags will result in both consumers and food retailers facing much higher costs. Not only is the paper option more expensive, there is no incentive for shoppers to bring reusable bags.

Additionally, the increased use of paper bags will ultimately drive up the volume in municipal recycling programs, with increased paper in the solid waste stream, both will face increased costs. This means municipalities have to pay more for recycling and waste removal services, an easily-avoidable expense that is being passed on to property taxpayers. Clearly, focusing solely on banning disposable plastic bags is more expensive for retailers, consumers and municipalities.

No one will be winning under the scenario of only banning single use plastic bags. The intention was never to push consumers to paper. The intention is to push to reusable bags. We want to reduce our consumption not increase our carbon footprint. The Delaware Food Industry Council and like-minded partners are supporting a statewide legislative initiative to phase out the use of both plastic and paper disposable bags throughout Delaware to encourage reusable bags as a beneficial alternative.

We salute state Rep Michael Smith, Rep Gerald Brady and Rep Valerie Longhurst for their ongoing fight to remove *all* single-use bags from the solid waste stream. This proposed legislation would include food safety protections and finally provide a uniform policy for governing the use of disposable bags throughout Delaware. We hope business, government and sustainability organizations all work together to educate consumers about the importance of advancing this effort and to advocate for a statewide solution that is based on less consumption. This is sound environmental policy that encourages the support of reusable bags.