

# THE STATE OF WASHINGTON IS FACING MANY CRITICAL ISSUES

“Statewide unemployment remains at 9 percent.”  
*The Seattle Times, 11/18/11*

“Students walk out to protest education cuts.”  
*The Seattle Times, 11/30/11*

“...The city's ability to protect vulnerable residents could be badly strained.”  
*The Seattle Times, 11/21/11*

**POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS**  
“Violent crimes are up 3 percent.”  
*KiroTV.com, 12/2/11*

## Banning reusable, recyclable plastic bags isn't one of them

### WITH WASHINGTON'S BUDGET AND ECONOMY IN SUCH BAD SHAPE, WHY IS THE SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL FOCUSED ON BANNING AND TAXING GROCERY BAGS?

#### **A new 5 cent bag fee - paid by you, pocketed by retailers**

After voters repealed a regressive grocery bag fee in 2009, Seattle City Council members have now proposed a ban on plastic bags and a new 5 cent fee on each paper bag you use at stores. Will the fee help pay for litter reduction, recycling programs or environmental protection initiatives? **NO**. The fee will go directly to the retailers, helping their bottom line while raising shopping costs on Seattle families.

#### **A return to paper bags - use more energy, create more pollution**

Compared to paper bags, plastic bags are more resource efficient, reduce landfill waste and generate fewer greenhouse gas emissions. Plastic bags take up a lot less space in a landfill (1,000 plastic bags weigh 13 pounds; 1,000 paper bags weigh 114 pounds)<sup>1</sup> and require far fewer trucks to transport. Studies also show that plastic bags generate 80 percent less waste than paper bags<sup>2</sup> and make up a tiny fraction (less than 0.5 percent) of the U.S. municipal solid waste stream.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Risky reusable bags - more toxic, create health risks**

*The San Francisco Chronicle* reports that many reusable bags, mostly made in China and from foreign oil, contain dangerous levels of toxins such as lead and can pose a health risk for consumers.<sup>4</sup> Independent studies have found that 97% of people never wash their reusable bags after using them to carry raw meats, poultry and other products, resulting in unhealthy bags that could contain E.coli, salmonella and other bacteria.<sup>5</sup>

### THERE IS A BETTER IDEA: MORE RECYCLING. NOT NEW FEES, FINES AND BANS!

*Plastic bag recycling has doubled in the U.S. in the last nine years.<sup>6</sup> But we don't have to stop there. Washington should lead the way with its own statewide policy to expand recycling of plastic bags and other packaging materials. Today, there are tens of thousands of U.S. jobs supported by the plastics manufacturing and recycling industries. Washington should lead the way in recycling plastic bags, films, sacks and wraps. That's leadership that is good for the environment and the economy.*

**Learn the truth about plastic bags and recycling solutions at [www.bagthebanwashington.com](http://www.bagthebanwashington.com)**

<sup>1</sup> Life Cycle Assessment for Three Types of Grocery Bags - Recyclable Plastic; Compostable, Biodegradable Plastic; and Recycled, Recyclable Paper. Chet Chaffee and Bernard R. Yaros, Boustead Consulting & Associates Ltd., 2007; p. 9 / <sup>2</sup> *ibid*; p. 54 / <sup>3</sup> U.S. Environmental Protection Agency 2009; p. 53. / <sup>4</sup> *San Francisco Chronicle*, "Studies find lead in reusable shopping bags," 1/25/11 / <sup>5</sup> Assessment of the Potential for Cross Contamination of Food Products by Reusable Shopping Bags; University of Arizona School of Public Health; June 9, 2010. / <sup>6</sup> Municipal Solid Waste in the United States: 2009 Facts and Figures; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; p. 53 (2009).