



June 2, 2014

Chairman Mike Gatto
California State Assembly Committee on Appropriations
California State Capitol, Room 2114
Sacramento, CA 94249

Dear Chairman Gatto & Members of the Committee:

I write today urging you to vote NO on SB 270, legislation pending before the committee that would ban plastic bags at grocery stores, convenience stores, pharmacies, and other retailers statewide, as well as impose a ten cent tax on every paper bag used at checkout. This ill-conceived plastic bag prohibition and paper ban tax would raise the cost of living in what is already one of the most expensive state in which to reside, reduce job opportunities, and comes at a time when California taxpayers and employers can least afford it. Aside from the negative economic impact it would have, a crusade against plastic bags and a hefty tax on paper bags is also a huge distraction from all of the serious challenges facing the state.

California taxpayers currently face the fourth highest state and local tax burden in the country. With the state taking over 11 percent of an average California taxpayer's income, Californians face a state and local tax burden that is well above the national average. Additionally, Californians have been hit with over 20 new or federal higher taxes in just the last five years. In this lackluster recover, with the economy having actually contracted in the first quarter of 2014, the last thing California taxpayers and the state economy need is another tax increase. Many members of California legislature fashion themselves defenders the poor and least among us. **It should be noted that the bag tax increase will disproportionately harm lower income households across California.**

SB 270 is touted under the auspices of environmental improvement and protection. However, bag bans have already proven to be an environmental loser in California. In 2007 San Francisco became the first city in the country to ban plastic bags at supermarkets and pharmacies. Litter audits conducted before and after the ban found that not only did the ban provide no positive environmental impact, plastic bags actually comprised a higher percentage of total litter after the ban.

Worse than the fact that SB 270 will provide no benefit to the environment are the unintended consequences. California's unemployment rate is hovering at eight percent, nearly over 26 percent higher than the national average. In light of this situation, it would be foolish to impose a statewide ban that could shut down several manufacturing plants, directly resulting in the elimination of hundreds of in-state jobs and thousands of job losses indirectly.

As is the case with many laws and regulations, bag taxes and bans can have unintended consequences. In the case of bag bans and taxes, there are health risks. A [recent study on this matter](#), portions of which were conducted in California, found that reusable bags are often used for multiple purposes and "seldom if ever washed." Researchers discovered "Large numbers of bacteria were found in almost all bags and coliform bacteria in half. Escherichia coli were identified in 12% of the bags and a wide range of enteric bacteria,

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including several opportunistic pathogens.” It seems as though a fitting title for SB 270 might be the “Have You Hugged Your Toilet Bowl Lately Act.”

California already utilizes a comprehensive program to promote the recycling of plastic bags. California lawmakers should not pile on with a redundant program that makes life more expensive for families and employers, hurts the economy, and does nothing to improve the environment. As such I urge you to vote NO on SB 270. Please contact ATR’s Director of State Affairs, Patrick Gleason (pgleason@atr.org), with any questions.

Onward,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "G. Norquist".

Grover Norquist