



For Immediate Release

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**NYPIRG's Earth Day Countdown of Ten Steps New York Must Take to be an Environmental Leader
Step 9: Ban Plastic Bags**

(NY) – From now until Earth Day, NYPIRG is counting down ten steps that New York must take to be a national environmental leader. With climate deniers firmly in control of national policies, it will be up to the states to act. In recent years, New York has unveiled ambitious environmental programs and actions. But announcements must be backed up by achievements.

Step 9 is for Governor Cuomo to provide leadership to enact a statewide plastic bag ban in 2018.

NYPIRG is urging the Governor to advance and fight for plastic bag ban legislation similar to that of California. The California law includes a statewide ban on thin plastic bags and a minimum 10-cent fee for paper and reusable bags. Senators Krueger and Hoylman and Assemblymember Englebright have already introduced legislation based on the California law (S7760 / A9953). More than 185 organizations signed on to a [letter](#) urging the Governor to take action.

Last year, Governor Cuomo approved legislation that *retroactively overturned* New York City's local law, which addressed the proliferation of plastic bags causing ecological damage and a solid waste disposal burden. In order to address concerns over the damage caused by plastic bags, Governor Cuomo created the New York State Plastic Bag Task Force. The Task Force was charged with developing a report and proposed legislation to address the detrimental impact of plastic bags on the state's environment. However, the task force failed to make any policy recommendation, and the governor failed to include a plastic bag proposal in his budget.

When he blocked the NYC law, the Governor said in a statement, "The costly and negative impact of plastic bags on New York's natural resources is a statewide issue that demands a statewide solution." According to the Administration, "residents use 23 billion plastic bags annually. A significant number of these bags make their way into littering the environment, harm wildlife, and are *ever-present* in waterways, along streets and in oceans and lakes."

[NYPIRG's policy paper on plastic bags](#) reviews the enormous impact that plastic bag use is having on the environment, particularly on the world's oceans. The plastic that ends up in the ocean isn't just unsightly and harmful to aquatic life; it resurfaces in the food chain, including fish and shellfish.

Showing leadership, California's law has two major components: (1) a statewide ban on thin plastic bags (under 2.25 mils)—the ones most often distributed by supermarkets (those with handles, not the ones used to wrap foodstuffs); and (2) a minimum 10-cent fee for paper & reusable bags (including thicker plastic bags).

Like New York, California has a large, diverse population with large urban areas and a substantial coastline. The law has been in effect for over a year, and has been working. The *Los Angeles Times* described consumers adjusting easily to the shopping experiences, and that "Plastic bags (both the banned and the legal variety) accounted for 3.1% of the litter collected from the state's beaches during the 2017 Coastal Cleanup Day, down from 7.4% in 2010."

Governor Cuomo should follow up on his commitment to a statewide solution for plastic bag waste and provide leadership to enact a statewide plastic bag ban in 2018.