



Statement

For Immediate Release

January 7, 2010

Contact: Jennifer Killinger (703) 741-5833

Email: jennifer_killinger@americanchemistry.com

BROWNSVILLE, TEXAS, BAG POLICY IGNORES ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Local Retailers and Recycling Interests Remain Hopeful that Facts Will Come to Light

ARLINGTON, VA (January 7, 2010) – Ignoring concerns raised by local retailers, businesses and supporters of plastic bag recycling, the Brownsville City Commission on Tuesday passed a voluntary ban on plastic bags at retail outlets. The ban, while voluntary now, is slated to become law next year. Opponents of the ban are hopeful that as the unintended consequences of the new policy are brought to light, the City Commission will opt for a more effective solution for reducing waste – such as a policy to increase recycling, which is becoming a national trend.

A recent study clearly shows that San Francisco's ban on plastic bags in 2007 resulted in a switch to paper bags, which require 70 percent more energy to produce, generate 50 percent more greenhouse gas emissions and produce 80 percent more waste than plastic bags. A year later, San Francisco's own litter audit determined that the ban did not reduce litter, one of the stated purposes of the city's ban.

That's the bad news for the environment. From an economic standpoint, paper bags cost 300 to 400 percent more than plastic bags. Those costs are initially borne by grocers and retailers and, ultimately, passed on to consumers.

Shari Jackson of the American Chemistry Council's Progressive Bag Affiliates expressed disappointment in the decision. "Brownsville's decision threatens to eliminate recycling opportunities not only for bags, but for all of the other plastic wraps that can be recycled with bags." Jackson noted that many large retailers already provide recycling bins so shoppers can bring back their plastic shopping bags and many types of product wraps – dry cleaning bags, news paper bags and wraps from bread, diapers and cases of soda – that are recycled with bags.

"We remain hopeful that the City Commission will closely evaluate the consequences of their decision and consider a more constructive path forward," said Jackson.

"Plastic bag manufacturers have worked with numerous municipalities on increasing access to convenient recycling and educating consumers about recycling their plastic bags and wraps. We would be delighted to work with the City of Brownsville on a similar initiative," Jackson said.



The recycling of plastic bags and wraps increased 27 percent nationwide from 2005 to 2007. Numerous states, including California, New York, Delaware and Rhode Island, and cities, such as New York City, Chicago and Tucson, have passed recycling legislation. These measures are expected to increase significantly the amount of plastic bags and wraps that are recycled into new consumer products, such as durable backyard decking, home building products, shopping carts and new shopping bags.

Last year, the Progressive Bag Affiliates announced a landmark recycling goal of 40 percent recycled content in all plastic shopping bags made by these companies by 2015. When fully implemented, the Full Circle Recycling Initiative will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 463 million pounds, conserve enough energy (mainly natural gas) to heat 200,000 homes, and reduce waste by 300 million pounds every year. More information is available at www.americanchemistry.com/fullcircle.

About the Progressive Bag Affiliates

The Progressive Bag Affiliates of the American Chemistry Council promote the responsible use and recycling of plastic bags. The PBA recycling toolkit is being used by retailers around the nation as a reference for determining the best ways to deploy effective recycling solutions in stores. To learn more about increasing plastic bag recycling, please visit www.plasticbagrecycling.org.

#

www.americanchemistry.com/newsroom

The American Chemistry Council (ACC) represents the leading companies engaged in the business of chemistry. ACC members apply the science of chemistry to make innovative products and services that make people's lives better, healthier and safer. ACC is committed to improved environmental, health and safety performance through Responsible Care®, common sense advocacy designed to address major public policy issues, and health and environmental research and product testing. The business of chemistry is a \$689 billion enterprise and a key element of the nation's economy. It is one of the nation's largest exporters, accounting for ten cents out of every dollar in U.S. exports. Chemistry companies are among the largest investors in research and development. Safety and security have always been primary concerns of ACC members, and they have intensified their efforts, working closely with government agencies to improve security and to defend against any threat to the nation's critical infrastructure.

