



# Statement

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## D.C. TAX ON RECYCLABLE PLASTIC SHOPPING BAGS MISGUIDED AND UNNECESSARY

ARLINGTON, VA (June 16, 2009) – *The Progressive Bag Affiliates (PBA) of the American Chemistry Council today expressed disappointment that the D.C. City Council ignored tried-and-true approaches to prevent litter, such as recycling, and instead passed a five-cent tax on recyclable plastic and paper shopping bags issued at checkout stands. PBA released the following statement:*

The D.C. City Council's decision to tax recyclable plastic and paper shopping bags during a recession is misguided and unnecessary. This tax is expected to cost Washington, D.C. families about \$5 million in 2010, dampen current efforts to increase the recycling of plastic bags and, most importantly, do nothing to reduce litter in the Anacostia River.

Most in our nation's Capital would agree that the Anacostia River needs help. Most everyone also would agree that plastics don't belong on our streets or in our waterways – plastics belong in the recycling bin. Many cities and states have looked at ways to reduce waste and litter, and the vast majority of them have determined that recycling makes the most sense for the environment and the economy.

Most major grocery and retail chains currently offer programs that allow shoppers to bring back plastic bags and all sorts of product wraps for recycling. The recycling of dry cleaning bags, newspaper bags, and wraps from bread, napkins, bathroom tissue, paper towels and soda cases all depends on at-store programs that grocers and retailers have implemented to recycle plastic bags.

Recycling is an environmentally and economically sound alternative to the tax and is already working in communities across the country. In 2007, more than 830 million pounds of plastic bags and wraps were recycled in the United States, marking a 27 percent increase over a two-year period.

In addition to promoting recycling, anti-litter efforts should focus on changing behaviors and enforcing litter laws, not raising taxes. History has shown that attempts to regulate the use of plastic bags aren't an effective means of reducing litter. A litter audit following San Francisco's ban on plastic bags revealed that plastic bag litter remained the same: only 0.6% of litter composition. Instead of taxing its constituents, the D.C. City Council should focus on preventing and capturing all types of litter before it enters local waterways.



It is unfortunate and deeply disappointing that the D.C. City Council overlooked recycling and litter prevention – commonsense approaches that are good for the environment, address the root cause of litter and avoid raising taxes.

### **About the Progressive Bag Affiliates**

The Progressive Bag Affiliates of the American Chemistry Council promote the responsible use and recycling of plastic carryout 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. For more information, please visit [www.plasticbagrecycling.org](http://www.plasticbagrecycling.org).

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*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<sup>®</sup>, 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.*

