FLORIDA RETAIL BAGS REPORT A “STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION” SAY PLASTIC MAKERS

DEP Report to Legislature Reveals Much Room for Agreement, but Factual Errors Too

ARLINGTON, VA (February 5, 2010) – Plastic bag makers this week called a recent policy report on retail bags from Florida’s Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) a step in the right direction. Although the report contains several factual errors, bag makers agree that there are readily available ways to reuse and recycle plastic bags. The Progressive Bag Affiliates, representing America’s leading makers and recyclers of plastic bags, together with area retailers are expanding these efforts in Florida.

In addition, bag makers agree that banning plastic bags is not the answer because such measures force stores to switch back to using paper bags, which, as the DEP concludes, would result in “a higher level of environmental harm from manufacturing to disposal (than plastic bags).”

The Progressive Bag Affiliates expressed appreciation for DEP’s commitment to partnering with all affected parties. “This is an opportunity for us to work closely with government, retailers, and recyclers to educate consumers about recycling plastic bags. Studies show that recycling works – new taxes and outlawing useful products just aren’t as effective,” said Shari Jackson, director of the Progressive Bag Affiliates.

The DEP report also points out that voters overwhelmingly rejected bag a bag tax in Seattle. And, in San Francisco, the city's own internal litter audit determined that the 2007 ban on plastic bags did not reduce litter, one of the stated purposes of the city’s ban. In fact, a recent study clearly shows that San Francisco’s ban resulted in a switch to paper bags, which cost 300 to 400 percent more than plastic bags, require 70 percent more energy to produce and increase greenhouse gas emissions and waste.

Although bag makers praised the report’s emphasis on growing efforts to reduce, reuse and recycle plastic bags, they were concerned that the report mischaracterized the reuse and recycling rate of plastic bags in Florida. Contrary to the report’s estimate of 12 percent, national surveys have found that more than 90 percent of consumers reuse plastic retail bags at home to line their waste baskets, to pack their kids’ lunches, to clean up after their pets and for countless other uses. In addition, U.S. EPA data show that plastic bags are recycled at a rate of 12 percent nationally and that number continues to grow.
There are many programs already underway in Florida to recycle plastic bags. "Innovative new recycling programs now span the state, so shoppers can return any leftover plastic bags – plus dry-cleaning bags, newspaper bags and plastic wraps from bread, paper towels, cases of soda and more – to most large retail stores for recycling. This valuable material is given a new life as durable backyard decking, home-building products, city park benches and new plastic bags,” Jackson said.

PBA continues to ask policy makers to focus on recycling education and encouraging shoppers to reduce, reuse and recycle their plastic bags.

**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](http://www.plasticbagrecycling.org).

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