

PITFALLS OF A PAPER BAG FEE – LESSONS FROM CALIFORNIA

California in 2016 implemented a statewide ban on the use of disposable plastic bags by retailers. The law also required that retailers **charge a fee of at least 10 cents for every paper bag** provided to customers. A new report by the California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery reveals serious pitfalls with the ban that should be considered before Oregon adopts a similar approach, such as the one contained in House Bill 2509.



Retailers Have Circumvented Protections for Low-Income Consumers



Some California stores have willfully misinterpreted bag fee exemptions for consumers on social assistance programs: “In some instances, stores have interpreted this provision to require that only a single bag be offered at no charge for qualifying customers.” [SB 270 Report to the Legislature, Page 2]

Efforts Now Underway to Raise Bag Fees Higher



California is already saying a 10-cent bag fee is insufficient and has pointed to a 25 cents per bag fee as the logical next step. “CalRecycle reviewed ordinances from cities and counties in California that are not subject to SB 270, and found that several had increased or set reusable grocery bag and recycled paper bag fees at 25 cents . . . Charging consumers a higher fee can provide multiple benefits.” [SB 270 Report to the Legislature, Page 10]

Shifted Customers to Other Types of Plastic Bags



Data from California show that the vast majority of people that have purchased bags from stores are purchasing a different type of plastic bag made from plastic film. 66 million plastic film bags were sold in the first six months after the California bill went into effect. [SB 270 Report to the Legislature, Page 15] Unlike paper bags, these plastic bags are not recyclable at curbside and are not compostable.

Will Hurt Jobs Connected to Local Paper Bag Production



In the first six months after the California bill went into effect, there was a 61% reduction in the number of paper bags provided to consumers. [SB 270 Report to the Legislature, Page 15] This bill, as written, incentivizes plastic – not paper. Paper bag manufacturing and associated jobs will pay the price.

Source: SB 270 Report to the Legislature, February 25, 2019, California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery, <https://www2.calrecycle.ca.gov/Publications/System/DR/Download/da80d129-7207-4a07-b2b3-f6983f1e8418>

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HB 2509's MANDATORY BAG FEE HURTS CONSUMERS

Portland Retailers Currently Providing Paper Bags Free of Charge

Fred Meyer (Kroger)	No Fee
Safeway	No Fee
Albertsons	No Fee
Walmart	No Fee
Green Zebra	No Fee
Zupans	No Fee
Whole Foods	No Fee
Trader Joe's	No Fee
Grocery Outlet	No Fee
QFC	No Fee
WinCo	No Fee
Market of Choice	No Fee
Target	No Fee
Bi-Mart	No Fee
New Seasons	No Fee



Current Incentives for Customers Using Reusable Bags, Including Paper Bags

Fred Meyer (location specific)	4-cent credit or fuel points
Whole Foods	10-cent credit
Green Zebra	5-cent credit
Trader Joes (location specific)	5-cent credit/gift card raffle
WinCo	6-cent credit
Market of Choice	5-cent credit
Target	5-cent credit
New Seasons	5-cent credit