



# ASSOCIATION-OF-WESTERN-PULP-AND-PAPER-WORKERS

*A Union for Today ... and Tomorrow*

Affiliated with the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America

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May 29, 2019

Senate Committee on Rules  
900 Court St. NE,  
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Burdick and Members of the Committee:

The Association of Western Pulp and Paper Workers (AWPPW) strongly encourages you to remove the mandatory passthrough fee on paper bags from House Bill 2509.

AWPPW members care deeply about the environment. Many of our members are avid outdoorsmen who want to protect our fisheries and waterways from litter and pollution. However, paper bags are not a part of the problem that this bill is trying to solve. We cannot solve our plastics problem by discouraging consumers from choosing locally manufactured, recyclable paper and we would ask you to consider the costs of this fee. Costs in the form of higher grocery costs for the Oregon consumer; and costs to family wage jobs throughout the state.

California passed a similar bill two years ago. A recent report on the impacts of that bill shows that while it is often touted as a ban on plastic bags, California grocers have continued their addiction to plastic, handing out nearly four thick plastic "reusable" bags for every paper bag. This has resulted in a 61% reduction in paper bag use six months after the bill went into effect.

Such a drop in paper bag usage would be devastating on unionized manufacturing jobs, forest product jobs and local economies. Many of the paper bags used throughout the country are made in Oregon. The pulp and paper portion of the industry alone provides nearly 4,300 jobs and over \$370 million in annual payroll income in Oregon. A 61% reduction in the use of fully recyclable and completely reusable paper bags will injure our industry and eliminate jobs.

Paper bags are made from a renewable resource, are compostable, fully recyclable and completely reusable. Each paper bag has an average of 40 percent recycled content and can easily be recycled to create other paper products. In fact, the recycling recovery rate for paper products is over 65 percent, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. In comparison, plastic bags, including reusables, are only recovered at a 10 percent rate.

We also have concerns about this bill's impact on family budgets. As the Grocers pointed out in their Measure 103 campaign, grocery taxes are regressive and working families will bear the

brunt of their pain. While the bill does include an exemption for customers on social assistance programs, a report on California's version of this bill shows that some stores narrowly interpreted the provision to only offer a single free bag. Also noteworthy in that report is a recommendation to raise the bag fee beyond 10 cents. Californians could soon be paying 25 cents for bags at the checkout line. It is not unreasonable to think that Oregon may follow suit if HB 2509 passes as written as this bill sets a floor for a paper bag fee but contains no ceiling.

Oregon stores already offering free paper bags where plastic has been banned show us that type of fee is an unnecessary gift to grocery store profits on the back of working families.

For Union jobs and for consumers, legislators should take the mandatory paper bag fee out of HB 2509.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gregory Pallesen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Gregory" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Pallesen".

Gregory A. Pallesen  
President, AWPPW