

Stimulus Material: GED Ready® - RLA

Plastic Bags

Saving Our City One Plastic Bag at a Time

- 1 The editorial staff at the Gulftowne Gazette says three cheers for the Gulftowne Ordinance Committee! Finally, they are serious about making reusable shopping bags mandatory in every store with Proposition 328.
- 2 Americans concerned about our environment agree that plastic bags litter our landscape and threaten wildlife. Many cities across the country and around the globe have banned their use. Paper bags are not the ideal replacement for plastic bags either. Cutting down trees to make paper greatly diminishes our forests. The actual manufacturing of paper bags contributes to pollution. The obvious solution is to mandate that consumers bring reusable bags with them when they go shopping.
- 3 Reusable bags are made from canvas or other cloth, man-made fibers, or sturdy plastic. A variety of these bags are sold at most supermarket checkout stands. Discount stores and even dollar stores sell reusable bags. These bags are lightweight, washable, and durable. Many styles can last for years. It is mind-boggling to think of how many trees would be saved and how much landfill space could be freed if all shoppers used reusable bags. A widely reported study found that the United States uses 100 billion disposable plastic shopping bags every year!
- 4 The cost to consumers to purchase reusable bags is minimal, some costing less than a dollar. Many retailers already charge fees to consumers who want their purchases placed in disposable plastic or paper shopping bags. While these fees are small, paying for one-time use bags on a weekly basis adds up. Eventually, the purchase of reusable bags is more cost-effective.
- 5 Those opposing the mandatory use of reusable shopping bags cite health concerns as their reason. They base their fears on a study conducted at the University of Arizona and Loma Linda University, which showed reusable bags to have unacceptable levels of bacteria growth and mold after being used to haul groceries, this issue can easily be addressed by washing the bags frequently. Using separate bags for meats and produce also reduces the chance of contaminating food placed in reusable bags.
- 6 Wake up, Gulftowne. Let 's all follow the ordinance committee's lead and finally put an end to the "paper or plastic" quest ion. Making a long-term investment now by purchasing reusable bags creates a win-win situation for our citizens and our environment.

Letter to the Editor

- 7 I strongly disagree with your editorial earlier this week on the new reusable bag ordinance. Shop owners in Gulftowne rely on tourists to make a living. Unfortunately, it appears the Ordinance Committee did not think beyond the grocery store when considering this terrible ordinance.
- 8 I own a gift shop. Tourists buy mementos, figurines, t-shirts, postcards and beach supplies. Many vacation purchases fit into bags no larger than an envelope. Requiring our visitors to bring reusable bags for such purchases makes absolutely no sense.
- 9 Most shop owners cannot afford to provide reusable bags to customers. The bags used now have logos, addresses, phone numbers, and website addresses. They are not free. Where in the ordinance is the cost to make new multi-sized bags with store information? Where is the investment in our community businesses?
- 10 Shop owners are also concerned about the environment, but we don't want tourists shopping in the next town where paper and plastic bags are still used to avoid this hassle. People come to Gulftowne to enjoy the beach and for relaxation. Why complicate their days and add an expense that makes them buy a bag for their purchases? This requirement may make sense in a grocery store, where most disposable bags are handed out anyway, but penalizing other types of shops who don't really contribute to the problem is unacceptable.
- 11 If this ordinance goes into effect, I hope the committee plans to add a few words to our city welcome sign: "Bring Your Own Bags".

Theo Jones
Owner, Gulftowne Gifts

Prompt

Some cities are beginning to address the environmental concerns associated with paper and plastic bag use, but not everyone agrees about what should be done. In your response, analyze both the editorial and the letter to the editor to determine which position is best supported. Use relevant and specific evidence from both sources to support your response.