

## EDITORIAL: Valley cities should ban single-use plastic bags



A bill to make California the first in the nation to impose a statewide ban on plastic bags at certain retailers passed a key legislative committee on Wednesday, but the legislation faces staunch opposition from bag manufacturers working to stem a flood of local bans meant to end clutter in landfills and beaches.

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It was not surprising that out-of-state plastic-bag makers succeeded in temporarily scuttling a statewide ban on single-use grocery bags that would have begun in July. With enough money to sink into signature gathering, any interest group can get its self-serving idea on a ballot.

And plastic-bag manufacturers and their friends spent more than \$3 million on this referendum. The industry has sunk millions more into fighting the slow spread of bag bans in California in recent years.

This time, it bought itself 16 months more of protection for its lucrative business, which trashes the Golden State. On Tuesday, Secretary of State Alex Padilla, the man who carried the bag ban bill when he was a state senator, announced that the referendum to undo his bill had qualified for the November 2016 ballot.

For Fresno and Clovis and other San Joaquin Valley residents, this will mean a reprieve from the minor inconvenience of *having* to take reusable bags on grocery shopping trips or paying for paper bags.

For the state's beaches, oceans, rivers, parks, streets, rivers and sewer systems, however, it means billions more plastic bags to accommodate. Less than 5% of the estimated 14 billion single-use bags used in California each year are recycled; the rest go to landfills or end up causing problems in the environment.

Californians don't have to allow this interstate abuse of their hometowns and public space. There may be a hold on a statewide ban, but nothing is stopping local governments from joining more than 130 cities and counties that said

“heck no” to bag pollution long before the state Legislature could get it together to pass a ban.

The mayors, city councils and boards of supervisors of the San Joaquin Valley: We’re looking right at you. By banning single-use plastic bags, you can save precious taxpayer dollars spent removing them from public medians, landscaping and gutters. These bags spoil our scenery, clog our runoff drains and litter our highways.

Roughly one-third of Californians live in a city or county that already has some sort of ban on plastic bags. In fact, as of Wednesday, 138 cities and counties in our state had banned them. Plastic bag makers have sued some of them, but have been unable to stop the shift in public sentiment.

However, such a shift has yet to happen in the Valley. According to the Californians Against Waste website, not a single Valley city or county has banned them — and we see the ugly results every day.

We also see how clean many of the communities on the Central Coast are when we vacation there. Monterey, Pacific Grove, Morro Bay, San Luis Obispo, Pismo Beach, Santa Cruz and other coastal cities have banned these bags.

Yes, it can be a pain to have to buy paper bags if you forget the reusable bags, or to have to buy dog-waste bags, but most people have adjusted when they realize the “free” bags come with substantial costs to the public treasury and the environment.

Besides, it’s galling that a small group of companies from Texas, South Carolina and New Jersey is trying to determine California’s public policy.

Californians, including Valley residents, can shut them down by urging their city councils and county supervisors to adopt a ban on single-use plastic bags right away.