



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Bob Lilienfeld
Phone: 248-726-9729
E-mail: use-less-stuff@comcast.net

Not So Fast: Research Reveals the Ironies in Plastic Bag Bans

Data Shows that Bans on Plastic Bags May Cause More Harm than Good

(June 7, 2007 – Rochester, MI) A review of highly credible, third-party research has revealed that banning traditional plastic bags from retail stores will probably not produce the intended results, and in the case of greenhouse gas generation, may actually harm the environment. Conducted by *The ULS Report*, the study was done after the city of San Francisco banned plastic bags in an effort to reduce environmental impacts and litter. Other communities around the country are considering similar bans.

The research, which was in large part commissioned and/or reviewed and published by the U.S. EPA and its French and Swiss governmental counterparts, points out a number of rather ironical facts:

- Although they are made from natural gas or oil, plastic bags actually consume less fossil fuels during their lifetime than do compostable plastic and paper bags. (The reasons are that compostable plastic bags use far more material than do traditional plastic bags, and it takes significant fossil fuel energy to convert trees into paper.)
- Plastic bags generate 60% less greenhouse gas emissions than do paper bags. And because composting creates carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas, the plastic sacks generate 79% fewer greenhouse gas emissions than do paper bags after the latter are composted!
- The best environmental choice is a reusable bag, as long as you actually reuse (or recycle) it.
- Cigarette butts, chewing gum, and candy wrappers account for about 97% of all litter. Paper and plastic bags are generally a very small part of the total.

According to Bob Lilienfeld, Editor of *The ULS Report*, “Frankly, these findings are a proverbial whack on the side of the head. While counterintuitive, they do indicate that bans on specific materials aren’t likely to either help the environment or significantly reduce litter. They also reinforce our decade-long belief that the best way to accomplish both of these worthy goals is by using less stuff in the first place. This means putting more items in fewer bags, avoiding double bagging, reusing bags at home, switching to reusable bags, and recycling disposable bags. Doing so should produce significant reductions in material and nonrenewable energy consumption, pollution, solid waste, greenhouse gas emissions, and litter.”

The ULS Report was published on a regular basis between 1994 and 2000. Editor Bob Lilienfeld, who co-authored the book *Use Less Stuff: Environmental Solutions for Who We Really Are*, is in the process of re-launching the report. The full report and research archive is at www.use-less-stuff.com.

#