

PLASTIC FREE DELAWARE

LOCAL GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE

Plastic Free Delaware is interested in assisting Delaware local governments in developing ordinances pertaining to addressing single use plastic pollution as more than fifty New Jersey coastal towns have done, and many others up and down the Atlantic seaboard (and globally). Others include West Chester (PA) and Washington, D.C., Montgomery County (MD), and many more. Local governments are more nimble than the state and even where the state legislature is taking action, local governments can often do more.

Such ordinances commonly include:

- (1.) Banning single-use plastic carryout bags used by retailers/stores/restaurants,
- (2.) Making the distribution of plastic straws in restaurants “by request only,”
- (3.) Banning polystyrene (Styrofoam) takeout food containers.

Facts on Single use plastics:

- Plastic straws are not recyclable and are unnecessary for most people, those who need them would still be able to request them; Styrofoam is rarely recycled and has very little market as a recyclable material; less than 10% of plastic carryout bags are recycled or reused, meaning more than 90% end up in landfills or blighting our beaches and our environment and communities.
- Plastic bags that are erroneously put in curbside recycling bins cannot be processed by the Materials Recycling Facility, clogging up the machinery, leading to increased taxpayer cost and end up in landfills
- Cost the city to remove from clogged city sewer and stormwater lines
- Cost the city to remove them from parks and public areas
- Are an eyesore – visual blight - to the residents and tourism
- Finds its way into our waterways then out to become plastic pollution in the ocean harming animals and entering our own food chain as toxic particles

It is clear from our ten year effort on plastic bags and tracking the statistics of recycling and the # found during beach cleanups, that regulation is needed. Simply relying on education and outreach is not addressing the crisis of plastic pollution.

The Plastic Bag law passed in Delaware earlier in 2019, HB130, goes into effect 1/1/2021 but only impacts the very largest retailers: <https://legis.delaware.gov/BillDetail?legislationId=47388>

Local governments can do more by expanding coverage to more stores and to restaurants as West Chester's ordinance has done.

Because of the increased awareness of this issue, many local governments are now doing comprehensive ordinances covering these types of single use plastics (as described above) in one comprehensive piece of legislation. Alternatively, we could start by addressing plastic bags or Styrofoam one at a time, in an ordinance.

Single use plastic law information and examples

- All in one ordinance example:
- <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/2019/06/vermont-adopts-most-comprehensive-single-use-plastics-ban/>
- Plastic Bags.
 - Glenrock, NJ https://glenrocknj.net/reduce_single_use_bags
 - West Chester, PA <https://west-chester.com/DocumentCenter/View/10745/Ordinance-2019-09--Plastics> Also includes plastic straws.
- Plastic Straws: Straws by request only.
 - Develop an ordinance which requires dining establishments to provide plastic straws to its clientele only by request.
 - Straws that are paper, plant, vegetable and other materials containing nothing artificial or synthetic are allowed.
 - An example of straw by request ordinance - <https://beverlypress.com/2018/12/council-approves-straw-law/>
- Styrofoam containers for takeout food (NYC, D.C., Maine and Maryland all now have laws prohibiting Styrofoam, among others):
 - Ban the use of Styrofoam containers for food takeout.
 - Overview of NYC ban on Styrofoam food containers <https://www.ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/news/2018/06/13/new-york-city-ban-on-polystyrene-containers-other-polystyrene-products-to-begin-in-2019>

For more info please visit www.plasticfreedelaware.org