



THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

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STUDENTS, ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCATES AND COUNCIL MEMBERS RALLY FOR LEGISLATION TO REDUCE WASTEFUL PLASTIC BAG USE

#BYOBag Week began Sept. 15 and continues until Sept. 21, challenging citizens to spend the week using a reusable bag instead of disposable plastic or paper bags

Today, dozens of New York City elementary, middle and high school students joined the **Natural Resources Defense Council**, the **Surfrider Foundation**, the **New York League of Conservation Voters**, **Citizens Committee for New York City**, **Citizens Campaign for the Environment** and other groups to rally for legislation by **Council Members Brad Lander**, **Margaret Chin** and others that would reduce the use of wasteful plastic bags in New York City, keeping our city more environmentally friendly and saving taxpayer dollars that are too often spent on the cleanup of plastic bag litter.

The students and advocates also celebrated their participation in #BYOBag Week (Sept. 15-21), which challenges New York City residents to spend the week using only reusable bags, instead of disposable plastic and paper bags. In preparation for Climate Week, BYOBag week is a way for every New Yorker to make a positive environmental impact as part of their daily life.

The schools represented at today's rally included **Maspeth High School**, from Queens; the **Brooklyn New School** and **M.S. 51**, from Brooklyn; and the **Hewitt School**, **Manhattan Country School**, **Friends Seminary** and **Trinity School**, from Manhattan. Following the rally, those students met directly with City Council members to talk to them about the importance of supporting the aforementioned plastic bag legislation.

That legislation, Intro. 209, which is co-prime sponsored by **Council Members Lander and Chin**, as well as **Council Member Donovan Richards** and **Public Advocate Letitia James**, would place a ten-cent fee on all disposable plastic and paper bags in convenience stores, supermarkets and other stores. A hearing on the legislation is expected within the next month.

New Yorkers use 5.2 billion bags annually or 624 per person per year, and the City spends \$10 million dollars annually to dispose of 100,000 tons of bag waste in landfills (*Source: DSNY*). In other municipalities, the use of modest charges has been proven to reduce consumption of disposable plastic bags by 60-95%.

142 local jurisdictions and counting (now including all of California, which has placed a ban on disposable plastic bags and a 10-cent charge on paper bags), in Hawaii, Alaska, Oregon, Washington, Arizona, Colorado, Texas, the District of Columbia, North Carolina, Maryland, New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts have all passed or enacted similar ordinances. Large cities already in place include Los Angeles, DC, San Francisco and Honolulu.

“As we approach the People’s Climate March and Climate Week, #BYOBag Week is something easy and fun that every New Yorker can do in their daily life that will make a difference,” said **Council Member Brad Lander**. “Reducing our disposable bag waste is a simple shift in habits we can all make that will help the environment immensely. And there's a way to make it happen that is simple, cost-effective, proven to work, and possible right away so I urge New Yorkers to support passage of our bill.”

“When we see this kind of passionate support from young people and families from across the city, we know that New Yorkers are ready to tackle the problem of wasteful disposable bags and make our communities cleaner and greener,” said **Council Member Margaret Chin**. “Also, like so many others participating in #BYOBag Week, I’m proud to show off just how easy it is to make the shift to reusable bags. With our strong coalition of advocates behind us, I look forward to working with my colleagues to push onward with our legislation to reduce litter and waste and save millions in taxpayer dollars.”

“Shopping with your own reusable bag is a small way New Yorkers can make a big difference in helping our city’s long term environmental sustainability,” **said Council Member Elizabeth Crowley.** “The City spends millions of dollars each year disposing of plastic bags that end up permanently polluting our sewers, rivers, and landfills. It’s up to us to be proactive and take steps now to make sure the next generation inherits a stronger and healthier city. I’m challenging all of my constituents to spread the word and join me in the #BYOBag challenge this week!”

“Each year, New Yorkers use 5.2 billion carryout bags. The cost of disposing of these bags is substantial and their cost to the environment is even greater,” **said Council Member Mark Levine.** “As we work towards passing legislation to reduce this practice, I’m proud to be joining my colleagues in taking the lead this week by bringing my own reusable bag whenever I go to the store.”

“I support this rally because I think New York should catch up to other large cities like LA and Washington, D.C. that have already passed this kind of legislation,” **said Keanna Hunter, a high school sophomore at the Hewitt School.** “Since we haven’t passed this legislation yet, New York is environmentally backwards, with discarded plastic bags lining the streets and trees. It is really a shame because it wouldn’t be a huge inconvenience if it was implemented. I already make efforts in my daily life to reduce my consumption of plastic bags. If the City Council passes this legislation, New York would live up to the expectation of being the greatest city in the world.”

“For two years, students have fought to get the City Council to either ban or impose a fee on plastic bags in New York City,” **said Audrey Rapoport-Martiak, a senior at the Hewitt School who is also president of the school’s environmental awareness club.** “At the most recent STOP (Students Take On) Bags Conference at the Hewitt School, students from around the New York area came to learn from environmental advocates about how to make a convincing one minute presentation to the City Council. Today is that day. We are meeting with City Council members to give them specific reasons why this legislation should be passed.”

“Sometimes environmental problems can seem too big or too far away for people to feel like they can make a difference,” **said Marcia Bystryn, President of the New York League of Conservation Voters.** “But with the #BYOBag Challenge, every New Yorker can make a positive impact – right now – in our own city. We are so excited to join our advocacy partners and members of the City Council as we kick off the #BYOBag Challenge and begin the countdown to hearings on this important legislation. We also salute the many students who will be meeting their representatives today to talk about the importance of this bill. Together, we can help New York become an even greener, cleaner city.”

“For 40 years, Citizens Committee has worked in the cities most underserved neighborhoods where environmental degradation disproportionately affects their residents,” **said Peter H. Kostmayer, CEO of Citizens Committee for New York City.** “So to raise awareness about the harmful environmental and economic effects of the single-use bag, we’re partnering with local volunteer groups and sponsoring reusable bag giveaways -100% recycled cotton canvas totes to be specific- across the city before, during, and beyond #BYOBag week. New Yorkers know common sense legislation when they see it and they tell us the Lander-Chin bill to reduce carryout bags is no exception. Let’s listen to them.”

“We’re seeing more and more great statistics on how a 10-cent charge on single-use bags leads to a tremendous change in consumer behavior,” **said Jennie R. Romer, attorney and founder of plasticbaglaws.org.** “People in cities that have already adopted similar legislation, including Los Angeles and Washington DC, are now bringing their own bags at much higher rates than before. For example, Alameda County, CA officials recently announced that bag consumption by covered retail stores has declined by 85% since their legislation went into effect. Several cities have also reported a corresponding decrease in plastic bag litter in storm drains and on city streets.”

“The Surfrider Foundation is dedicated to protecting our city’s beaches, waterways and wildlife — all of which are threatened by the continued distribution of billions of single-use bags each year in NYC,” **said John Coghlan, Rise Above Plastics coordinator for the Surfrider Foundation, NYC Chapter.** “Our chapter believes Intro. 209 by Council Members Lander and Chin is the best solution for our city’s bag litter and waste problems. We organized #BYOBag week to educate NYC about the legislation and show New Yorkers how to live without single-use bags.”

“Participating in #BYOBag Week is a great opportunity for people to explore how easy bringing your own bag actually is,” **said Colin Beavan, Executive Director of the No Impact Project and author of No Impact Man.** “It’s time for New Yorkers to become a leader on reducing waste and improving our environment and quality of life.”

“We are proud to be supporting the proposed New York City plastic bag bill and strongly believe it will effectively reduce plastic bag waste and enhance the City’s environment,” **said Roger Byrom, CEO of Addison, an independent New York City-based creative agency.** “We designed and commissioned a reusable bag made from recycled plastic bottles to show our long-term commitment to reducing waste in New York City and protecting the wider environment. This is a hugely important issue and we will continue to use our influence to help pass the bill.”