

# NSDA Public Forum Debate (Jan-Feb 2024)

Topic: Banning Single-Use Plastics (Rebuttals, ver. 1.17)

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# **REBUTTALS (PRO): BANNING SINGLE-USE PLASTICS**

## **INTRODUCTION (PRO)**

*Hello. My name is... \_\_\_\_\_ .*

*In this speech, I will refute each of my opponent's arguments.*

*But first, let's discuss the framework...*

*We think you should prefer our interpretation because...*

- 1. First... Ours uses Oxford, which is a very reliable source.*
- 2. Also... Ours is fair-minded; we are accurate and precise and are not excluding any reasonable arguments.*

*So... "**On balance**" the side providing the most "**Quality of Life**" should win the debate.*

*Now, I will refute their argument about... **Harming the Economy**.*

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### PRO (vs. CON): HARMING THE ECONOMY

*They said... Banning Single-Use Plastics will harm the economy.*

*We say... a ban will not harm the economy.*

*Because...*

#### **First... Retailers Earn Profit from Plastic Bans**

*S: According to... the Australia National University Law School, June 10, 2018*

<https://envcomm.act.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/ACT-Plastic-bag-ban-options-analysis.pdf>

[Regulating Plastic Shopping Bags in the Australian Capital Territory: Plastic Shopping Bag Ban Act 2010 Options Analysis, Andrew Macintosh, Australia National University Law School, June 10, 2018]

**It states...** Given these wholesale and retail prices, the increases in retailer profits that are attributable to the plastic bag ban are likely to be small. For example, for single-use HDPE plastic bags, if the plastic bag ban was not introduced, retailers would have spent approximately \$875,000 on plastic bags in 2017-18, yet received no direct revenue from their distribution. With the ban, the aggregate net profit (before tax) to retailers from the sale and distribution of HDPE bags was probably in the order of \$100,000, meaning there has been a net gain to retailers of around \$975,000 relative to the situation if the ban had not been introduced. For reusable LDPE bags, the aggregate net gain to retailers between these two scenarios is likely to be in the order of \$35,000 across the ACT. While small, the evidence suggests retailers are likely to have benefitted financially from the introduction of the ban rather than incurring costs.<sup>113</sup>

**This means...** Ironically, a ban on single-use plastics could actually help businesses to make even more money.

#### **Also... Reducing Economic Harm from Plastic Debris**

*S: According to... Marine Pollution Bulletin, October 1, 2018*

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpolbul.2018.10.001>

[Riley E.J. Schnurr, et al, Reducing marine pollution from single-use plastics (SUPs): A review, Marine Pollution Bulletin, Volume 137, 2018, Pages 157-171, ISSN 0025-326X,]

**It states...** Microplastics could also cause human health impacts due to consumption of microplastic contaminated foods, with potential effects mainly associated with toxicity of chemicals that are absorbed from the environment or additives that are used in the plastic materials themselves (UNEP, 2015; GESAMP, 2016; Karbalaie et al., 2018). Marine plastic pollution has justifiably become an important global issue for citizens, governments, academics, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Seltenrich, 2015). Economic and aesthetic impacts of marine plastic debris are vast and the global estimate of damage to marine ecosystems caused by plastic amounts to at least USD \$13 billion annually from lost tourism revenues due to adverse impacts on recreational activities and navigation (Raynaud, 2014; Borrelle et al., 2017). In the Asia-Pacific region alone plastic debris costs tourism, fishing and shipping industries roughly USD \$1.3 billion annually and in Europe, removal of plastic debris from coastlines costs approximately €630 million [Euros] each year (UNEP, 2018a).

**This means...** banning single-use plastics, should reduce billions of dollars that are lost from existing economic harms caused by plastic debris. The U.S. is the world's largest economy, and these costs should be comparable.

*Therefore... Banning Single-Use Plastics will not harm the economy.*

*"The next argument I will refute is... **Causing Health Problems.**"*

[or]

*"The next argument I will refute is... **Harming the Environment.**"*

[or]

*"The next argument I will refute is... **Worsening Climate Change.**"*

## NSDA Public Forum Debate (Jan-Feb 2024)

Topic: Banning Single-Use Plastics (Rebuttals, ver. 1.17)

### PRO (vs. CON): CAUSING HEALTH RISKS

*They said... Banning Single-Use Plastics will... cause health risks.*

*We say... a ban will not cause health risks.*

*Because... single-use products made from plastic will cause more severe and longer-lasting harm.*

#### **First... Chemicals and Particles Pose Serious Health Risks**

*According to... the Harvard Environmental Law Review, April 2023*

<https://journals.law.harvard.edu/elr/wp-content/uploads/sites/79/2023/04/HELRL-Vol.-47.1-AdlerWells.pdf>

*It states... Additive chemicals with flame retardant, waterproofing, or plasticizing qualities (which can be distinguished from chemicals in the polymer structure) are mixed with the polymer to enhance the plastic product.<sup>121</sup> Over 8,000 additives are used in combination with polymers to create plastic products.<sup>122</sup> Additive chemicals are typically not bonded to the plastic and may leach out of plastic products over time.<sup>123</sup> In fact, researchers hypothesize that nanoplastics act as a sort of “Trojan horse” in introducing toxic additive chemicals to our bodies because very small plastic particles can cross cell membranes and may enhance absorption of additive chemicals.<sup>124</sup> For example, virtually all pregnant women studied in the United States have the plastic additives polybrominated diphenyl ethers (“PBDEs”) and phthalates in their blood.<sup>125</sup> PBDEs, which are associated with adverse neurobiological outcomes, are flame retardant chemicals often put in plastic enclosures encasing electronics.<sup>126</sup> Phthalates make plastic products more malleable and are known hormone disruptors.<sup>127</sup> One study reported that sperm counts among men in Western countries have declined nearly 60% in the last forty years, which those scientists attribute in part to endocrine-disrupting chemicals such as phthalates.<sup>128</sup> Phthalates are also strongly associated with pregnancy loss; in one study, women with the highest levels of phthalates had a 17% chance of early pregnancy loss compared to 4% among the women with the lowest levels.<sup>129</sup> Phthalates may also impact children’s IQ: one study found that children whose mothers had the highest levels of phthalates during pregnancy had IQs on average seven points below those whose mothers had the lowest levels.<sup>130</sup>*

*This means... banning single-use plastics, will reduce unnecessary plastics from being created in the first place, which prevents more micro and nano plastics from contaminating our health. Alternatives will biodegrade, plastics won’t.*

#### **Also... Buildup Reaches Crisis Point**

*According to... the United Nations Environment Program, June 5, 2023*

<https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/may-2023/understanding-plastic-pollution-and-its-impact-lives>

*It states... Overall, 46 per cent of plastic waste is landfilled, while 22 per cent is mismanaged and becomes litter. Unlike other materials, plastic does not biodegrade. It can take up to 1,000 years to break down, so when it is discarded, it builds up in the environment until it reaches a crisis point. This pollution chokes marine wildlife, damages soil and poisons groundwater, and can cause serious health impacts.*

*This means... if we don’t ban single-use plastic, then we are putting millions of lives at risk from serious contamination.*

*Therefore... Banning Single-Use Plastics will not increase health risks.*

*“The next argument I will refute is... **Harming the Environment.**”*

[or]

*“The next argument I will refute is... **Worsening Climate Change.**”*

[or]

*“So, for all these reasons, please vote for the PRO.”*

*“Thank you.”*

## NSDA Public Forum Debate (Jan-Feb 2024)

Topic: Banning Single-Use Plastics (Rebuttals, ver. 1.17)

### PRO (vs. CON): HARMING THE ENVIRONMENT

*They said...* Banning single-use plastics will harm the environment.

*We say...* a ban will not harm the environment.

*Because...* when we reduce the production of plastics, we also reduce its waste, and this protects marine habitats.

*For example...*

#### **First... Ban Reduces Usage by 85%**

*According to...* National Resource Defense Council, January 9, 2020

<https://www.nrdc.org/stories/single-use-plastics-101/>

**It states...** Plastic is putting a strain on waste management systems, our oceans, and vulnerable communities the world over. A wave of single-use plastic bans is sweeping the country and the globe—most often on plastic bags, straws, stirrers, and takeout clamshells. (Some places are going so far as to ban single-use plastics entirely; most notably, India intends to go this route by 2022.) Among the U.S. cities to outlaw plastic straws are Malibu, Berkeley, Seattle, and Miami Beach. Plastic bag bans—ideally accompanied by a fee on paper bags—are also catching on. New York State and Hawaii just passed theirs, set to go into effect in 2020, and California’s bag ban, which was passed in 2014, has been shown to have reduced plastic bag usage by 85 percent (with some customers opting to pay a 10 cent fee for thicker plastic bags) and has reduced coastal pollution.

**This means...** banning single-use plastics will protect millions of marine habitats by significantly reducing the amount of plastic waste in the environment.

#### **Also... Alternatives Designed to be Biodegradable & Non-Toxic**

*According to...* TIME Magazine, November 28, 2023

<https://time.com/6339914/plastic-alternatives-pollute/>

**It states...** One of the most promising plastic replacements is polyhydroxyalkanoate, or PHA, which is made by fermenting plant sugars that come from beets, corn, and other vegetable waste, or even biogas from landfill, in a process similar to brewing beer. As with other naturally-occurring polymers like silk or cellulose, PHA products degrade into nontoxic components within months. They can also be shredded, melted, and reformed into new products. Different kinds of bacteria, some naturally occurring, others specifically engineered, are used instead of chemical additives to create properties such as flexibility and transparency.

**This means...** PHA, a non-synthetic alternative, made from waste, using bacteria instead of chemicals, and will biodegrade within months. So, banning single-use plastics, leads to alternatives that are far better for the environment.

*Therefore...* Banning Single-Use Plastics will not harm the environment.

*“The next argument I will refute is... **Causing Climate Change.**”*

[or]

*“So, for all these reasons, please vote for the PRO.”*

*“Thank you.”*

## NSDA Public Forum Debate (Jan-Feb 2024)

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### PRO (vs. CON): CAUSING CLIMATE CHANGE

*They said...* Banning single-use plastics will increase global warming.

*We say...* a ban will not cause global warming.

*Because...* by reducing plastic production and its waste, will in turn reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

#### **First... Plastics are Driving Force Behind Climate Change**

*According to...* the Environmental Center at the University of Colorado, February 25, 2021

<https://www.colorado.edu/center/2021/02/25/climate-impact-single-use-plastics>

**It states...** Single-use plastics are becoming increasingly prevalent across the world. These plastics most obviously create eyesores and pose a threat to the natural ecosystems they make their way into. However, these plastics are also a driving force behind climate change.

**This means...** banning single-use plastics, will protect billions of lives, because it reduces the production of plastics and reduces the burning of plastic waste, which can reduce the risks of global warming.

#### **Also... Plastic is Contributing to the Climate Crisis**

*According to...* the United Nations Environment Program, June 5, 2023

<https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/may-2023/understanding-plastic-pollution-and-its-impact-lives>

**It states...** Is pollution the only problem with plastic? No, it also contributes to the climate crisis. The production of plastic is one of the most energy-intensive manufacturing processes in the world. The material is made from fossil fuels such as crude oil, which are transformed via heat and other additives into a polymer. In 2019, plastics generated 1.8 billion metric tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions – 3.4 per cent of the global total.

**This means...** banning single-use plastics will reduce production and disposal of plastic, which reduces a significant amount of greenhouse gas.

#### **[OPTIONAL] Finally... Plastic Production Results in Methane Emissions**

*According to...* the Harvard Environmental Law Review, April 2023

<https://journals.law.harvard.edu/elr/wp-content/uploads/sites/79/2023/04/HELLR-Vol.-47.1-AdlerWells.pdf>

**It states...** The environmental harms associated with petroleum and natural gas production are too extensive to be recounted here.<sup>47</sup> The United States has become the world's top producer and exporter of natural gas, however, and hydraulic fracking supplies an increasing percentage of the raw materials for plastic production.<sup>48</sup> As fracking has become more prevalent, associated risks have grown more apparent, from methane emissions to groundwater contamination.<sup>49</sup>

**This means...** banning single-use plastics could reduce contamination and reduce methane emissions, which are particularly harmful when it comes to climate change.

*Therefore...* Banning single-use plastics will not increase the risk of global warming.

*“So, for all these reasons, please vote for the PRO.”*

*“Thank you.”*

## **NSDA Public Forum Debate (Jan-Feb 2024)**

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# **REBUTTALS (CON): BANNING SINGLE-USE PLASTICS**

## **INTRODUCTION (CON)**

*Hello. My name is... \_\_\_\_\_ .*

*In this speech, I will refute each of my opponent's arguments.*

*But first, let's discuss the framework...*

*We think you should prefer our interpretation because...*

- 1. First... Ours uses Oxford, which is a reliable source.*
- 2. Also... Ours is fair-minded; we are accurate and precise and not excluding any reasonable arguments.*

*So... "**On balance**" the side providing the most "**Quality of Life**" should win the debate.*

*Now, I will refute their first argument about... **Reducing Health Risks**.*

## NSDA Public Forum Debate (Jan-Feb 2024)

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### CON (vs. PRO): REDUCING HEALTH RISKS

*They said...* banning single-use plastics will reduce health risks.

*We say...* a ban will not reduce health risks.

*Because...* it will ban medical and safety products as well as increase the spread of disease.

#### **First... Circumvention Through Thicker Products**

*According to...* *Enhesa, Last Accessed: January 2024*

<https://www.enhesa.com/resources/article/are-bans-the-solution-to-plastic-pollution/>

**It states...** It is also worth learning from the experience of banning plastic bags; the ban led to an increase in the prevalence of unregulated thicker plastic bags. There is also research that suggests that alternatives to plastic bags such as cotton bags or paper bags also have environmental impacts that cannot be neglected (either greenhouse gas emissions, the use of pesticides and the use of copious amounts of water). For example, the fact that the alternatives currently available may actually have a greater (or different) environmental impact or that people and companies shift to using other plastics that are allowed.

**This means...** the ban will not be effective because companies will create convenient multi-use products using thicker amounts of plastic. Instead of reducing health and environmental threats – the ban would actually make things worse.

#### **Also... Alternatives Still Contain Toxic Chemicals**

*According to...* *TIME Magazine, November 28, 2023*

<https://time.com/6339914/plastic-alternatives-pollute/>

**It states...** Like conventional plastics, both plant-based and biodegradable versions—no matter their source—still need chemical additives to help with durability, fire resistance, waterproofing and colorfastness. Compressed fiber and paper plates, bowls, and cups are often lined with a plastic film to keep them from leaking. Those additives can be toxic for human health and dangerous for the environment, yet few have been studied.

**This means...** the alternatives will be just as bad if not worse due to having the same toxic additives.

#### **[OPTIONAL] Finally... Alternatives Increase Health Risks**

*According to...* *the Oklahoma Chamber of Commerce, Last Accessed: January 2024*

[https://uniformityofcommerce.org/documents/Plastic%20Bag%20Fact%20Sheet\[1\].pdf](https://uniformityofcommerce.org/documents/Plastic%20Bag%20Fact%20Sheet[1].pdf)

**It states...** Environmental Effects: While the economic and employment effects of plastic bag bans are substantial, there are no environmental benefits to banning plastic bags. Plastic bags require less energy to produce and recycle, and they create less municipal waste than cloth bags. Cloth bags need to be used 104 times before they have an environmental advantage over plastic bags, and most cloth bags are used half that amount. Reusing cloth bags also has potential negative health effects as this practice can lead to CROSS-contamination and disease. As studies have shown, there is much evidence in favor of using plastic bags over cloth bags. Banning plastic bags will likely have a negative impact on jobs, the economy, and the environment.

**This means...** banning single-use plastics would put tens of millions of families at greater risk of getting sick from bacteria and disease.

*Therefore...* banning single-use plastics will not reduce health and safety risks.

*“The next argument I will refute is... **Harming the Environment.**”*

## NSDA Public Forum Debate (Jan-Feb 2024)

Topic: Banning Single-Use Plastics (Rebuttals, ver. 1.17)

### CON (vs. PRO): PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

*They said...* banning single-use plastics will protect the environment.

*We say...* a ban will not protect the environment.

*Because...* the alternatives will be even worse than the plastic.

#### **First... No Factual Data Supporting Environmental Benefits**

*S: According to... Enhesa, Last Accessed: January 2024*

<https://www.enhesa.com/resources/article/are-bans-the-solution-to-plastic-pollution/>

**It states...** While we would expect that imposing a ban on single-use products would result in environmental benefits, there is no actual data that supports this statement. Although some countries have reported a decrease in the use of such products, others have reported an increase in plastic waste.

**This means...** there is no guarantee that a ban on single-use plastics will reduce plastic waste!

#### **Also... Alternatives Worse for the Environment**

*According to... Competitive Enterprise Institute, July 13, 2018*

<https://cei.org/blog/five-reasons-banning-plastics-may-harm-the-environment-and-consumers/>

**It states...** Plastics have important environmental benefits. In many ways, plastics are better for the environment than other alternatives because they are more efficient and use less energy during production and transport. Plastic consumer goods like straws, foam cups, and utensils are less energy intensive to produce than alternatives like paper or aluminum. Production of these items takes more resources, creates more waste, and results in more pollution than the production of disposable plastic items. Reusable items like foam cups, straws, and bags require more than 100 uses—and in more than 1,000 in the case of foam cups—justify the energy required to produce them.

**This means...** the alternatives will require more resources, will create more waste, and will create more harm compared to their plastic counterparts. So, the ban will fail to fix the root causes, and will lead to even worse pollution than before.

#### **[Optional] Finally... Biodegradable Alternatives Still Causing Harm**

*According to... TIME Magazine, November 28, 2023*

<https://time.com/6339914/plastic-alternatives-pollute/>

**It states...** Pennie Lindeque, head of science for marine ecology and biodiversity at the U.K.'s Plymouth Marine Laboratory, is currently trying to do just that, investigating how the breakdown process of biodegradable plastics impacts the ocean ecosystem. Marine creatures still mistake fragments for prey, and chemicals released in the process of breaking down might have unforeseen consequences for other kinds of ocean life, including coral. "Biodegradable materials could help reduce the impacts of plastic waste in the ocean. However, we must be sure that such materials, and the chemicals they contain, do in fact demonstrate little or no impact on organisms and ecosystems," she says. We don't want to, as she puts it, "jump from the frying pan into the fire."

**This means...** Marine animals will still suffer and die, due to the alternatives having chemicals that make them last long enough to do harm to the marine animals, coral reefs, and other habitats.

*Therefore...* banning single-use plastics will not protect the environment.

*"The next argument I will refute is... Preventing Climate Change."*

## NSDA Public Forum Debate (Jan-Feb 2024)

Topic: Banning Single-Use Plastics (Rebuttals, ver. 1.17)

### CON (vs. PRO): PREVENTING CLIMATE CHANGE

*They said...* banning single-use plastics will prevent the harms of climate change.

*We say...* a ban will not reduce climate change.

*Because...* the alternatives will require more energy and give off even more greenhouse gas emissions.

#### **First... Bans Cause Even Greater Harm**

*According to...* *Enhesa, Last Accessed: December 2023*

<https://www.enhesa.com/resources/article/are-bans-the-solution-to-plastic-pollution/>

**It states...** It is also worth learning from the experience of banning plastic bags; the ban led to an increase in the prevalence of unregulated thicker plastic bags. There is also research that suggests that alternatives to plastic bags such as cotton bags or paper bags also have environmental impacts that cannot be neglected (either greenhouse gas emissions, the use of pesticides and the use of copious amounts of water). For example, the fact that the alternatives currently available may actually have a greater (or different) environmental impact or that people and companies shift to using other plastics that are allowed.

**This means...** banning single-use plastics leads to thicker plastics, which means burning more fossil fuels and the alternatives consume more energy, give off more greenhouse gasses. Their side makes things worse! This is a "Turn".

#### **Also... Alternatives Create Substantially Higher Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions**

*According to...* *McKinsey & Company, July 6, 2022*

<https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/chemicals/our-insights/climate-impact-of-plastics>

**It states...** Among applications for which nonplastic alternatives are used at scale, the plastics examined in this paper offer lower total GHG contribution compared with alternatives in 13 of 14 cases (exhibit). GHG savings range from 10 to 90 percent, considering both product life cycle and impact of use. In addition, in many applications, particularly those concentrated in food packaging, there are few alternatives to plastics today. In fact, plastics adoption in the near term can help decarbonization efforts in these areas, particularly in terms of food spoilage and energy efficiency, given their lower GHG footprint.

**This means...** banning single-use plastics would lead to greater greenhouse gas emissions and would pose a significant risk to both nature and humans. Alternatives pose a potentially 90% greater risk!

*Therefore...* Banning Single-Use Plastics will increase the risks of climate change.

*"So, for all these reasons, please vote for the CON. Thank you."*