

**February 24:** The United States federal government should ban single-use plastics.

## **ADVICE FOR REBUTTALS (IN GENERAL)**

### **To maximize these rebuttals:**

- **Cite evidence** to back up claims— purely-analytical rebuttals won't always be enough to convince a judge.
- Flow well and adapt your responses to your **opponents' specific arguments**.
- Adapt these rebuttals **for your specific case**, so you don't end up contradicting your case or your other rebuttals by *just* reading them.
- **Make sure you understand these rebuttals before you use them.** *Just* reading these during a round, without understanding them, is useless and perhaps counterproductive (e.g. saying both 'X is nonunique' and 'X isn't true').
- Supplement these rebuttals with other arguments you hear from teammates, during rounds or elsewhere.
- These rebuttals are all just thoughts that popped into my head. Please prepare better rebuttals for your specific case/circuit/tourney.



**February 24:** The United States federal government should ban single-use plastics.

## NEG REBUTTALS (TO AFF ARGUMENTS)

1. **Bioplastics:** *Bioplastics can fill-in for traditional plastics under a ban, thus negating the disadvantages of a plastics ban.*

- a. Bioplastics worse: Bioplastics face a large number of challenges that prevent them from replacing petroleum plastics:
  - i. there isn't enough supply capacity to replace traditional plastics
  - ii. When put in a landfill, as most are, bioplastics create methane, which is a far more potent greenhouse gas than carbon
  - iii. Bioplastics are often confused for normal plastics, thus complicating recycling and disposal efforts
  - iv. Bioplastics can take just as long to break down as traditional plastics
  - v. Some plant-derived plastics are chemically indistinguishable from traditional plastics

**(Baker 23, senior international climate and environment correspondent at TIME)**

2. **Bans Work:** *Plastics bans have worked in other places, and could also work in the US.*

- a. Canada: A nationwide SUP ban in Canada would have led to *more* waste being produced, not *less*. At the same time, it would have incurred high costs on residents, without impacting oceanic trash levels. **(Green 22)** The US, much like Canada, has an excellent waste-disposal system, and a plastic ban would likely turn out the same way.  
**(Green 22, Fraser Institute Fellow)**
- b. Kenya: A nationwide plastic bag ban in Kenya led to the creation of a plastics black-market, including plastic bag cartels, that smuggled in plastic bags from other countries. **(Parker 19)** Given the US' very-porous Southern border, it's likely the US would end up the same way.  
**(Parker 19, Nieman fellow at Harvard University)**
- c. US – Preemptive Bans: 17 US states have implemented preemptive plastic ban laws, meaning they've decided they *don't want* plastic bans in their states. By contrast, only 8 states have plastic bag bans, and 0 states have SUP bans. The numbers show that American states don't want to ban SUPs, and a federal ban would go against the will of the States.  
**(Earthday 19)**

3. **Carbon Footprint:** *Plastics have a significant carbon footprint; a plastic ban would decrease this footprint.*

- a. Products vs Packaging: If we want to reduce our carbon footprint, we should focus on products instead of plastic packaging, which usually makes up only a few percent of the total carbon footprint of a purchased item:

**the resource extraction, manufacturing, and use phases of a product generally dominate the environmental impacts of most products, whereas the production of packaging and packaging disposal often represent only a few percent of total life cycle impact.**

**(Miller 20, LCA researcher, PhD Civil & Materials Engineering)**



**February 24:** The United States federal government should ban single-use plastics.

- b. Turn: SUP better: When it comes to food items, those packaged in single-use plastics often have a *lower* carbon footprint than those without, as the plastic prevents food waste.

**A number of LCA studies show that when compared to their traditional counterparts, consumer products that reduce food waste and energy use tend to have lower aggregate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, despite generating a higher quantity of solid waste through single-use plastic packaging....**

**a study on direct-to-consumer meal kits showed that the meal kits had fewer greenhouse gas emissions than the same meals purchased at a grocery store, despite having greater amounts of packaging.**

**(Miller 20, LCA researcher, PhD Civil & Materials Engineering)**

**4. Microplastics:** *A plastics ban can help to reduce the microplastics in our environment, water, and bodies.*

- a. No solvency: It isn't just single-use plastics that emit microplastics, it's also the plastics that make up our clothes, furniture, water pipes, and much of our other built world—banning single-use plastics creates inconvenience and economic damage, without actually fixing the problem.
- b. Lifespan: Eating plastic isn't great for you, but we've had plastics around for 100 years. During that time, we've added 25 years to the average lifespan. If there's gains to be made in health in America, it's on a better diet, lower stress, more exercise and less drug use—not the miniscule gains we'd make from less microplastics.

**5. Oceans:** *A plastics ban can help to save the ocean from its trash and plastics crisis.*

- a. Wrong focus: if we want to stop trashing the ocean, we should focus on the sources of the trash: fishing gear, and rivers in developing countries.
  - i. The top ocean polluters are China, Indonesia, Philippines and Vietnam. Only 5% of oceanic trash comes from 38 OECD countries, which includes the US **(Lomborg 19)**
  - ii. About 46% of the debris in the ocean is fishing gear waste—only 0.03% is single-use plastics—meaning that fishing gear is a 1500x bigger factor than the Single Use Plastics that Aff is trying to ban. **(Lomborg 19)**

**6. Plant-based Plastics:** *Plant-based materials can be used instead of plastics.*

- a. Land Use: Plant-based products require croplands, which often leads to environmental destruction and monocropping—much like with biofuels.

**The other potential area of concern is the substitution of plastics with plant-based materials.**

**Forests are already being felled to grow crops to feed the world's booming demand for meat production and wild land is also disappearing to produce bio-fuels for cars and electricity generation.**

**(Harrabin 18)**



**February 24:** The United States federal government should ban single-use plastics.

**7. Phased-in Ban:** *A ban could be slowly phased-in to get the public, and the economy, used to life without SUPs.*

- a. Disadvantages: Phasing in a bad policy slowly still leaves you with a bad policy. Single-use plastics are better for the environment than alternatives, are necessary for medical use, scientific research, and disability aids, and a ban would likely create more trash than it saves (Canada proves). These disadvantages stand no matter how quickly or slowly the ban is implemented.

**8. Plastic Bag Bans:** *Plastic Bag Bans have been successful in several cities, states and countries—they could serve as a model for a US SUP ban.*

- a. California: Data from California shows that while there was some reduction in plastic bag use, there was also an increase in the purchase of plastic bags for waste basket use—a dual use plastic grocery bags had served pre-ban.
- b. Alternatives Bad: Plastic bag bans lead to the use of alternatives, which have a larger carbon footprint and are worse for the environment.

**Reusable cloth bags are not necessarily better for the environment. Research demonstrates that alternative products use significantly more energy over each product's lifecycle. Studies show cloth bags must be used more than 100 times before they yield environmental benefits, which is likely far more uses than most people get before they lose or toss the bags....**

**Plastic bag bans could increase solid waste....**

**both paper and reusable bags—take up more landfill space.**

(Logomasini 19, adjunct fellow at the Competitive Enterprise institute)



**February 24:** The United States federal government should ban single-use plastics.

## **AFF REBUTTALS (TO NEG ARGUMENTS)**

1. **Bans Fail:** *Bans have been tried in other countries, but consistently end up failing.*
  - a. Canada: A proposed Canadian SUP ban would have reduced both plastic waste and plastic pollution—if we want to do the same in the US, we should also consider a SUP ban. (**Government of Canada 21**)
  - b. China: The Chinese SUP ban has led to a 46% decrease in plastic bag use (**Wang et al. 21**), and likely massive reductions in SUP use across the board.
  - c. Vermont: A Vermont SUP ban resulted in a 91% decrease in plastic bag use, with positive effects on revenue and cleanliness for food businesses. (**Belarmino et al. 23**)
  
2. **Carbon Footprint:** *LCA analysis shows that plastics can be better for the environment, and have a smaller carbon footprint, than other materials.*
  - a. Petroleum: Just because some things are worse, doesn't mean plastics are good. SUPs are part of the petroleum industry, the major cause of climate change—and stopping climate change means stopping single-use plastics:  
  
**A growing number of researchers and activists are warning that the world must drastically reduce single-use plastic production and consumption to keep the earth from warming beyond the 1.5°C target.**  
(Wilson Center 21)
  - b. Legislation: If the petroleum industry should be regulated, the plastics industry should be regulated as well:  
  
**single-use plastics is really a piece of the fossil fuel infrastructure, it doesn't make any sense to have robust policies and laws that are tough on fossil fuels but remain silent and inactive on single-use plastics.”**  
(Pritchard 21)
  
3. **Circular Economy:** *Fixing the recycling system with a 'circular economy' approach can help to make all our plastic recyclable, without all the Disadvantages of a SUP ban.*
  - a. Greenwashing: The 'circular economy' method is petrochemical industry propaganda:  
  
**corporations across the petrochemical value chain have banded together to contain the circular economy policy agenda, appearing to be sustainable while proliferating unsustainable markets... Current circular economy policies fail to challenge the capitalist imperative for growth, glossing over “reduction” among the Rs of the circular economy.**  
(Mah 21, professor of sociology at the University of Warwick)
  - b. Toxic: The 'circular economy' approach requires toxic chemical recycling, which disproportionately hurts low-income, working class communities who tend to live around these petrochemical factories.  
(Mah 21, professor of sociology at the University of Warwick)



**February 24:** The United States federal government should ban single-use plastics.

**4. Covid:** *SUPs help stop the spread of diseases like covid; a SUP ban will make this problem*

- a. Plastics Not Safer: Studies have shown Covid-19 could be stable on plastic for up to 3 days, compared to 1 day for cardboard—other studies have shown similar results, that single-use plastic doesn't make it less likely to transmit viral infections, and actually allows viruses to remain infections for long periods of time.

**(McVeigh 20)**

- b. Propaganda: The petroleum industry used the covid crisis to spread fear about plastic bans, spreading disinformation through conservative, petroleum-industry-funded thinktanks:

**A number of conservative think tanks and lobbying groups are now using the coronavirus pandemic to stoke fears about reusable products in order to fight plastic bag bans in the United States....**

**such tactics are using the current public health emergency as an "opportunity to exploit people's fears around Covid-19 to push their pro-pollution agendas."....**

**Both the organisations in question have been reportedly linked to fossil fuel companies, according to the New York Times.**

**(Ho 20)**

**5. Ineffective:** *National plastic bans are an ineffective tool to combat environmental waste*

- a. Necessary Solution: The global plastics crisis is a multi-dimensional issue, and no single solution will completely solve it, but national plastics bans are part of the solution that's needed.

**(Borrelle et al. 20, PhD; University of Toronto Postdoc research fellow)**

- b. Model: National bans on lead paint, drunk driving, and lobotomies have all drastically driven down those bad social policies. How could it possibly be that a SUP ban would be any different?

**6. Lifecycle Assessment:** *The proper way to measure carbon emissions & environmental impact is through LCA – and LCA shows that glass, metal and paper have smaller carbon footprints than plastic*

- a. Not sufficient: LCAs are helpful for understanding product cycles, but not sufficient to quantify environmental impact on animals and the natural world:

**LCA studies on plastic materials do not account for the environmental consequences of marine wildlife ingesting or becoming entangled in plastic waste, broader environmental impacts of waste that ends up in uncontrolled environments (i.e., litter), or upstream effects of plastics production such as oil spills. By these metrics, alternatives to plastic, such as paper, become the more environmentally favorable material.**

**(Pearson & Khare 20; MIT professors in i. Chemistry and ii. Materials Science)**



**February 24:** The United States federal government should ban single-use plastics.

7. **Recycling:** *We should lean into recycling rather than make a drastic move towards banning SUPs.*
  - a. Not effective: Only 9% of plastic is recycled; 72% ends up in landfills or the environment (**Main 23**) – the rest is burned, creating energy but also toxic gasses and carbon emissions.
  - b. Recycling Ineffective: Recycling plastics degrades their quality, so in a plastics-based economy, virgin plastics made from petroleum are constantly needed—transitioning to a post-plastic system is the only choice.

