

Opponent Testimony on Senate Bill 222

Senate Local Government, Public Safety & Veterans Affairs Committee

Ruth Hardy

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Thank you, Chairman Manning and members of the committee for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Please oppose SB 222 which would prohibit communities from placing local fees/bans on single-use containers:

Many have suggested that a ban or fee placed on single use items such as plastic bags would put an undue financial burden on seniors and others with low or fixed incomes, but if you think it through, you will find that this argument is flawed, and here's why:

1. Let's take the example of plastic bags. While folks may assume that plastic bags are free, in actuality, businesses pay for these bags, and end up charging more for nondiscretionary items such as food. So rather than a bag fee being a regressive tax, the inflated grocery prices become built-in regressive costs.
2. The costs of reusable bags easily pay for themselves over time. I have been using reusable cloth bags for over 30 years, and they have lasted through that entire time, with plenty of life still left in them.
3. Communities that enact bag bans or fees can and should come up with strategies to provide reusable bags to those on limited incomes. Retail businesses should help with this, since it will benefit them in the long term.
4. Pet owners think that grocery bags are free to be reused for pet poop, but unfortunately they are being subsidized by non-pet owners (who must unjustly pay higher food costs despite bringing their own reusable bags, and who are striving to reduce their impact on escalating environmental costs). Pet ownership is a choice, and it is an owner's responsibility to bear the costs of their pet's waste disposal. They may be able to use a purchased pet bag many times over for non-waste uses before using it for waste disposal, making it more economical. We just need to change our mindset.
5. Many states/municipalities have already passed bag bans/fees which have included exceptions for certain uses which are deemed necessary, such as for meats or garbage bags. Others have found that plant-based, compostable bags will work in cases such as these, without the environmental harms.

6. But there are far graver costs caused by the unnecessary use of plastic bags which we must not overlook. The Petrochemical Hub being proposed for the Ohio River Valley aims to provide shale gas as a feedstock for plastics production. Ethane will be split from the other gases found alongside methane in shale gas (via "cracker plants") to form ethylene, used in plastic bag production. Since the natural gas "boom" has not panned out due to the overabundance of low-priced gas, the oil & gas industry has shifted its focus to hooking Americans on single-use plastics to drive up gas demand in order to become profitable.

Unfortunately, each phase of production in the Petrochemical Hub is highly polluting:

New evidence demonstrates that pipelines, compressor stations, ethane cracker plants, underground storage, fractionators, cryogenic facilities, and other infrastructure components are responsible for substantial public health and climate change impacts. Pipeline disasters, major methane leaks, and reports of local toxic emissions and related health concerns are increasingly common near these facilities. Since fracking was exempted from the Safe Drinking Water Act in 2005, water pollution is also an issue.

Petrochemical Emissions:

1. **Methane gas** - a by-product of natural gas drilling, and one of the worst greenhouse gas pollutants contributing to climate change, is 87 times more potent at trapping heat in the atmosphere than is CO₂ (IPPC 2013). Methane is a major contributor to climate change, and thus to the escalation of extreme & costly climate events we are already experiencing in the Midwest. A recent National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) report projects that the Midwest's agricultural economy will be hit especially hard by climate change.
2. **Other hydrocarbons** (propane, butane, isobutane) are even more volatile than methane.
3. **Chemical emissions:**
Long-term health effects: Adverse impacts include low birth weight and preterm birth (both of which are leading causes of infant death), respiratory impacts, cancer risks, and occupational health and safety risks. Each of these severe health issues impacts Ohio's economy and taxpayers.

A. Benzene, toluene & xylene (Benzene, toluene and xylene are neurotoxic, carcinogenic and classified as "priority pollutants" by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. It is believed that long-term exposure to certain amounts of benzene, a known carcinogen and mutagen, can increase the risk of leukemia).

B. Carbon Monoxide (increased by 379.5%) *

C. VOC's (increased by 264000%) *

D. N-hexane

E. Methylmercaptan (toxic if inhaled – MSDS).

F. Some chemicals are "proprietary secrets" and cannot be identified.

4. Fine particulates (PM 2.5 increased by 110.89%) * - severe respiratory & heart conditions, diabetes

5. Fine silica emissions from sand - silicosis; class II carcinogen

6. Radium – carcinogen

*A comparison of the previous major source of air pollution source, the R.E. Burger Power Station, and predictions of the future emissions from the PTTGC ethane cracker in Dilles Bottom, OH.

In addition to these pollutants, the ethane cracker will emit 38 tons per year of Hazardous Air Pollutants (HAPS) characterized by the EPA as being "known or suspected to cause cancer or other serious health effects, such as reproductive effects or birth defects, or adverse environmental effects.", and will also emit 1,785,043 tons per year of greenhouse gasses. - FrackTracker

It is often said that local governments are the laboratories of democracy. Home Rule allows localities to try out innovative policies on a small scale to discover which ones are most effective. Communities suffering economic and/or health and safety related costs must have the right to try to limit these problems through local ordinances. It's time to implement real solutions to plastic pollution, particularly those that reduce the proliferation of single-use plastic containers. Please oppose SB222.

Thank You,

Ruth Hardy