

I've spent a lot of time worrying about and researching climate change and plastics in particular. I am grateful to have the opportunity to express my concerns in detail to decisionmakers. My comments today are with respect to SB210 on today's schedule but it is my understanding that HB 625 is substantially the same and my comments would be equally applicable to HB 625.

SB210 is sponsored by petroleum companies to restrict lawmaking on carryout bags and containers to the state level. Petroleum companies are not evil. But they are comprised of rational people. Naturally rational people are seeking to maintain the status quo and restricting any battles they may have to fight to 50 state capitals instead of hundreds of thousands of localities. Since fracking technology has been invented, oil and gas have been plentiful, nobody worries about gas prices anymore, and renewable energy investment by petroleum companies is just icing on the cake. Nobody is depending on it. But this cannot last much longer.

Eventually the oil and gas reachable by fracking will run out. But well before then our climate will be irreversibly altered by our society's need to burn these products to maintain our energy needs. We need petroleum companies to focus heavily on renewable energy. They are in the best position to show us the way forward and we need them motivated to do that.

In the meantime, part of what we are doing with all that energy is producing plastic. And almost everything we produce has a linear existence, creation to use to disposal. Certain companies have figured out a use for certain kinds of renewed plastic so a small portion of these products can continue on one more segment on the line, recycled, used, finally disposed in a landfill. Despite the high hopes of a consumer depositing her plastic product in a recycle bin instead of the trash, even if things go right and nobody contaminates the recycling and a waste hauler can successfully offer it to a buyer, in order for purchasing it to make sense, the buyer must have found a way to reprocess that product and very few plastics are on that list--the most notable example is plastic type #1 beverage bottles into carpet or clothing or playground equipment and benches. If purchasing it does not make sense, that load of recycling that so many people worked to preserve and transport will go into a landfill.

What we need is products with a circular existence. We need somebody who knows plastic to be motivated to invent ways to make a given plastic usable over and over again. The new model would be created, recycled, recreated, recycled, recreated, recycled, indefinitely. Clothing out of clothing, carpet out of carpet. Switching to reusable products and renewable energy need not cost any jobs, to the petroleum industry or anybody else. Consumers would be glad to buy it, there is just nobody selling it to them.

I am not against all plastics. Thank God for sterile medical equipment that saves lives every day. To preserve it I would be more than willing to give up pounds and pounds of junky plastic toys my kids bring home from every birthday party. I stopped buying kids' meals at fast food restaurants over five years ago to avoid all those junky plastic toys and my kids don't miss them. They still get their burgers and fries and they are happy with that. Part of the changes we need involves a culture shift.

Another change likely to happen when we re-examine our carryout habits is that restaurants may decrease their portion size so that customers are not leaving so much food behind useless on their plates. That can only help America's obesity epidemic. It is well documented that eating out greatly contributes to the obesity rate, largely due to increased portion size over the amount people would prepare and consume at home.

Legislating use of disposable carryout bags and other containers is one of the first steps in making consumers and retailers aware of energy use and active participants in conservation. We can give up these containers with little to no trouble so it makes great sense as a starting point in re-examining our use of plastics. Some communities are more ready than others to take this on, and those that are should be permitted to do so.

I read a document by the Equinox Center entitled, "Plastic Bag Bans: Analysis of Economic and Environmental Impacts" (2013), written to advise the City of San Diego using pre- and post- bag ban usage data from San Jose, Santa Monica, and Los Angeles County. It concluded that measuring economic impact was more difficult than measuring environmental impact, but "there has been no substantial negative long-term impacts to retailers, as well as no demonstrated migration of consumers to jurisdictions without [plastic bag bans]" and also that "while it is logical that the plastics industry would be negatively impacted, a lack of research on the topic makes it difficult to estimate what this impact would look like" and the plastics industry could mitigate some of that effect simply by manufacturing reusable bags.

As a consumer in Orange Township, Ohio, I feel the statement about lack of consumer migration is exactly right. If stores in Orange Township started imposing ten-cent bag fees I would not start shopping in another jurisdiction, even if that jurisdiction is merely half a mile away. I would be surprised to discover that any of my friends or neighbors would so change their buying patterns. Consequently, this is not an appropriate issue on which to remove home rule. I have seen a video of a state official somewhere explaining that states need to take over regulation of certain issues to avoid an unworkable patchwork quilt of laws that vary by locality. Each retailer needs to know the law where it is located. Each consumer simply does what she is told by the cashier. If that includes a bag fee, so be it. Even if each locality's rules varied widely from each other, which is in fact unlikely, most would probably be one of 3 or 4 variations, it will not cause retailers any problems complying with the laws and it will not cause consumers to forum-shop to find an area with "the best bag laws." Localities are in the best position to decide their own waste management rules and they need not worry about bag fee laws pitting them against each other.

SB 210 has one purpose--to allow petroleum companies to do business as usual. There is no benefit to removing home rule for this and in fact we all depend on them stretching themselves beyond business as usual. It is my hope that this legislation will not pass.

Thank you. Shelli Clark, Orange Township, Ohio resident