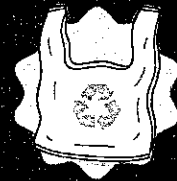# Myths vs. Facts

Let's set the record straight — plastic bags are the most environmentally friendly choice at the checkout counter.
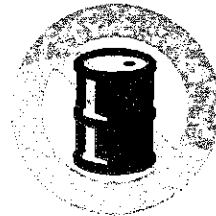
MYTH
Plastic bags are made from oil.

FACT
Plastic bags are _not_ made from oil.

They are made from ethylene, which must be removed from natural gas in order to make it safe for use as a domestic fuel.

Ethylene's only use is for the manufacture of products like single-use plastic grocery bags. Otherwise, it would have to be burned off, which would pollute the air with greenhouse gases. Reusable totes, like the kind for sale at the supermarket checkout counter, are made in Asia and much more likely to be made from oil.
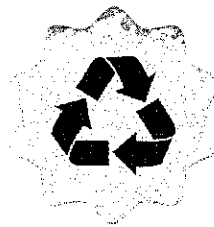
MYTH
You can't recycle plastic bags.

FACT
Plastic retail bags _are_ 100% recyclable.

While they are typically not accepted in curbside recycling programs, they are 100% recyclable if taken to a store drop-off location. In fact, more than 90% of the U.S. population has access to plastic bag recycling drop-off points, which are usually located at grocery stores and major retail chains.

MYTH
Plastic bags take up a lot of space in landfills and make up a large percentage of litter.

FACT
According to the U.S. Department of Environmental Protection, plastic bags and sacks make up 0.3% of municipal solid waste.
Plastic retail bags are a fraction of this number.

Statewide litter surveys find that plastic bags typically make up less than 1% of litter.

DID YOU KNOW?

You can recycle a lot more alongside plastic bags.

Be sure to include the following items with your plastic bag recycling: **bread bags, produce bags, dry cleaning bags, newspaper bags, air pillows, and product overwrap** (the plastic wrap around packages of paper towels, toilet paper, and similar items).

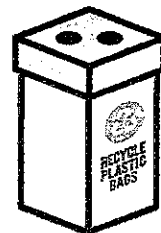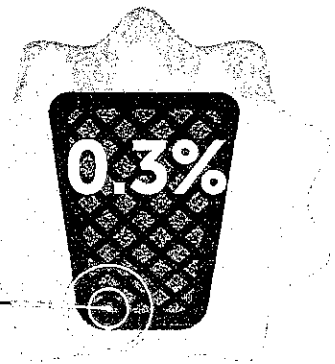**RECYCLE PLASTIC BAGS**

0.3%

MYTH
Plastic shopping bags are single use.

FACT

According to the government of Québec, plastic shopping bags are reused at a rate of 77.7%.

Plastic bags have myriad uses, but they are most often reused as small trash can liners or to pick up pet waste.

In fact, recent research has revealed that after California's plastic bag ban, trash bag sales skyrocketed. Trash bags use more plastic than traditional plastic retail bags, which leads to more plastic in landfills.

Recycled plastic bags are used to make new bags or materials for playgrounds, benches, construction, and more.
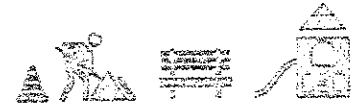
Who is responsible for plastic in the ocean?

Asia

Other
Countries
U.S.A.

?!?
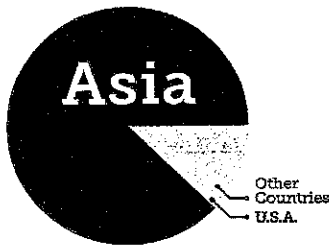
MYTH
Banning plastic bags will help reduce plastic in the ocean.

FACT

Banning plastic bags in the United States is a drop in the ocean. Scientists estimate that up to 95% of plastic in the ocean comes from 10 river systems in Southeast Asia and Africa. Therefore, banning plastic products in the United States will not make an impact on ocean plastic.

However, the U.S. plastic bag industry is dedicated to sustainability and has invested heavily in plastic bag and film recycling infrastructure.

SOURCE: **Export of Plastic Debris by Rivers into the Sea**, Christian Schmidt, Tobias Krauth, and Stephan Wagner, *Environmental Science & Technology*, 2017.

?!?

MYTH
Plastic bags contribute to climate change. Paper bags and reusable bags are more environmentally friendly.

FACT

Plastic bags are the most sustainable carryout bag option at the checkout counter. The governments of Denmark, Québec, and the United Kingdom found that compared side by side with reusable and paper bags, the traditional plastic carryout bag has the smallest environmental footprint every time.

Number of reuses needed to have a lower environmental impact than a traditional plastic retail bag:

Paper Bags 4-20

Majority made in the USA

Reusable Totes 11-75

Majority made in Asia

Cotton or Canvas Bags 100-2,954

Majority made in Asia

SOURCE: **Environmental and Economic Highlights of the Results of the Life Cycle Assessment of Shopping Bags**, Recyc-Quebec, December 2017.
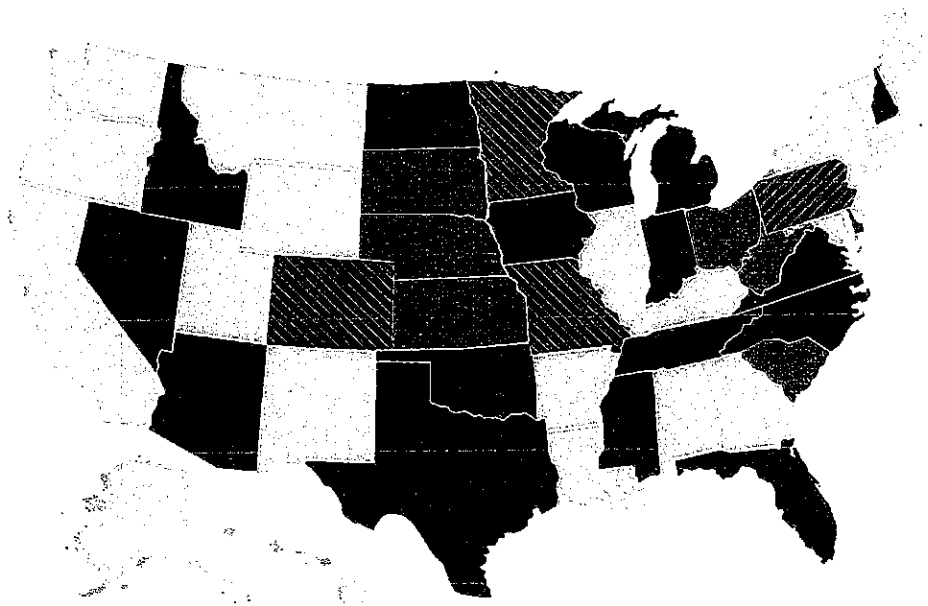

IT'S NOT JUST BAGS ANYMORE.

Items regulated at a local level include: cups, lids, plates, bowls, cutlery, takeout containers, prepared food containers, trays, napkins, packing peanuts, coolers, shipping boxes, cartons, straws, stirrers, and more.

2020 Statewide Uniformity Status

● Active Legislation for Statewide Uniformity

● Statewide Uniformity Law in Place*

- *Missouri & Minnesota have statewide uniformity for retail bags.*

- *Pennsylvania passed a one year moratorium pending a study*

- *Colorado has statewide uniformity for bans. Not taxes.*