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LOS ANGELES COUNTY  
SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE/  
INTEGRATED WASTE MANAGEMENT TASK FORCE  
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July 25, 2013

The Honorable Doc Hastings, Chairman  
United States House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Hastings:

**H.R. 1686 (INTRODUCED APRIL 23, 2013)  
TRASH REDUCTION ACT OF 2013**

The Los Angeles County Solid Waste Management Committee/Integrated Waste Management Task Force (Task Force) **opposes** H.R. 1686, **unless it is amended**. If enacted, the proposed legislation would impose a five-cent tax on every paper or plastic disposable bag that retailers provide to customers and the collected monies would go to the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Pursuant to Chapter 3.67 of the Los Angeles County Code and the California Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989 (Assembly Bill 939, as amended), the Task Force is responsible for coordinating the development of all major solid waste planning documents prepared for the County of Los Angeles and the 88 cities in Los Angeles County with a combined population in excess of ten million. Consistent with these responsibilities and to ensure a coordinated and cost-effective and environmentally sound solid waste management system in Los Angeles County, the Task Force also addresses issues impacting the system on a countywide basis. The Task Force membership includes representatives of the League of California Cities-Los Angeles County Division, County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors, City of Los Angeles, waste management industry, environmental groups, the public, and a number of other governmental agencies.

The Task Force is generally supportive of measures that encourage the use of reusable bags while discouraging or eliminating single-use bag usage. Each year, as many as 19 billion plastic carryout bags are consumed in California, the equivalent of 1,600 bags per household per year. Less than five percent of those bags are recycled, with the remainder disposed in landfills or ending up littered on beaches, waterways, parks and

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roads. Due to their lightweight nature, single-use plastic carryout bags are disproportionately more likely to end up as litter. Plastic bag litter makes up as much as 25 percent of the litter stream and significantly impacts communities and the environment. In Los Angeles County alone, local and State governments spend tens of millions of dollars each year on litter prevention, stormwater infrastructure cleanup, and enforcement activities, including single-use bag litter. In the last few years, more than 70 local governments throughout the State including the County of Los Angeles and City of Los Angeles, have voted to phase out the distribution of single-use plastic bags by supermarkets and other stores to their customers.

The production, distribution, and disposal of paper carryout bags also have known adverse effects on the environment, some of which may be more significant than impacts of plastic bags since single use paper bags are heavier and bulkier than single use plastic bags. If a tax is placed only on plastic bags, paper bag usage might substantially increase, thereby offsetting the environmental benefits of eliminating plastic bags and replacing them with other impacts from paper bags, therefore it is important to place an equal deterrence on plastic and paper single use bags in order to encourage reusable bags, which are far more sustainable and have the lowest environmental impact on a per-use basis.

While H.R. 1686 would discourage the use of single-use plastic and paper bags by imposing a tax on these items, the bill lacks provisions that would assure a fair distribution of revenues generated by the said tax. In its current form, HR 1686 would impose a \$0.05 tax at the point of sale for each disposable bag provided to a customer by a retailer. If the retailer has a qualified carryout bag recycling program, the Secretary of Treasury would pay \$0.01 of the \$0.05 collected back to the retailer. The remaining \$0.04 would be deposited into a trust fund created for the act. From time to time the Secretary would pay from that fund into the Land and Conservation Fund. However, there is no further detail as to how and where the monies collected as a result of this act would be distributed from the fund.

The Task Force respectfully requests an amendment to the bill to specify that funds be distributed back to local jurisdictions on a per capita basis. As an advisory body for the most populous county in the nation, we have seen all too often our region donate funds to Federal or Statewide programs, while seeing far less of the benefits from those programs return to Los Angeles County.

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For these reasons, the Task Force **opposes** HR 1686 unless **it is amended** to provide collected funds to local jurisdictions on a per-capita basis. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Mike Mohajer of the Task Force at [MikeMohajer@yahoo.com](mailto:MikeMohajer@yahoo.com) or at (909) 592-1147.

Sincerely,



Margaret Clark, Vice-Chair  
Los Angeles County Solid Waste Management Committee/  
Integrated Waste Management Task Force and  
Council Member, City of Rosemead

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cc: Congressman James Moran Jr.  
Each Member of the House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources  
Each Member of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors  
California State Association of Counties  
League of California Cities  
League of California Cities, Los Angeles County Division  
San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments  
South Bay Cities Council of Governments  
San Fernando Valley Council of Governments  
Gateway Cities Council of Governments  
Westside Cities Council of Governments  
Each City Mayor and City Manager in the County of Los Angeles  
Each City Recycling Coordinator in Los Angeles County  
Each Member of the Los Angeles County Integrated Waste Management Task Force