

# Environmentalists and industry duke it out over plastic bags

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Campaigns against disposable plastic shopping bags and their environmental impact recently scored a major win. In August, California lawmakers passed the first statewide ban on the bags, and Governor Jerry Brown is expected to sign it. But the plastic bag industry is not yielding without a fight, according to an article in *Chemical & Engineering News*, the weekly newsmagazine of the American Chemical Society.

Alexander Tullo, a senior correspondent with C&EN, reports that the anti-bag campaign logged its first small victory in 1990 when Nantucket became the first place in the U.S. to ban single-use bags. A number of cities and counties around the country have followed suit or are weighing measures, such as charging customers a 5- or 10-cent fee for every bag, to curb their use. Meanwhile, the bag industry has ballooned, and now, about 100 billion bags are used every year in the U.S. The main problem with these staggering numbers, environmentalists say, is that there is no good way to dispose of them. They also end up littering the land and the water, potentially harming wildlife.

The [plastic](#) bag industry counters that environmentalists and the media exaggerate the potential harm [bags](#) can cause. They also point out the economic toll a universal [ban](#) would take. One industry spokesperson said 30,000 jobs could be at risk. He also warned that the anti-bag campaign could be just the beginning of a much larger war against plastics in general, and if it continues, the costs would only mount.

**More information:** "Breaking the Bag Habit" -  
[cen.acs.org/articles/92/i37/Breaking-the-Bag-Habit.html](https://cen.acs.org/articles/92/i37/Breaking-the-Bag-Habit.html)

Provided by American Chemical Society

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