



City of Omaha  
Jean Stothert, Mayor

May 20, 2019

Office of the Mayor  
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Dear Council President Gray and members of the Omaha City Council,

As you prepare for another public hearing and vote on an ordinance to ban plastic bags in the City of Omaha, I want to reiterate my opposition to this proposed ordinance, request that you place it on file, and instead support a litter study to determine the best approach to reducing litter and waste.

Last week, I attended the Community Leaders of America Conference where Mayors and City Council members from around the country discussed the pros and cons of plastic bag bans. The research presented at the conference provided new information that we must consider.

For example, the EPA reports that plastic bags make up less than 0.3% of municipal solid waste. Statewide litter surveys, the most recent in New Jersey, show plastic bags typically make up less than 1% of litter, and 90% of the discarded plastic bags are from sales at convenience stores, which by their size, would be exempt from the proposed ordinance.

Research conducted by Dr. Rebecca Taylor, an economist at the University of Sydney, and published in January, 2019 in the Journal of Environmental Economics and Management shows California's plastic bag ban has resulted in skyrocketing plastic trash bag sales. One type of plastic bag has been replaced with another. (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0095069618305291?via%3Dihub>).

If retailers cannot use plastic bags, they will likely not accept plastic bags for recycling either, which eliminates an opportunity to recycle many types of plastic bags including dry cleaning, bread bags and even Amazon pouches.

I remain supportive of a resolution that requires all businesses that use "t-shirt" style plastic bags to phase them out over a specific period of time as we study this important environmental issue.

Additional information provided at the CLA Conference is included in the attachments.

Sincerely,

Jean Stothert,  
Mayor, City of Omaha