



To: House Committee on Natural Resources, Fish & Wildlife
From: Johanna de Graffenreid, Environmental Advocate, VPIRG
Subject: Testimony Regarding H.105
Date of Testimony: March 29th, 2017

Dear Chairman Deen and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on H.105 today. For the record, I am Johanna de Graffenreid. I represent the Vermont Public Interest Research Group as their Environmental Advocate this morning.

VPIRG has long been in support of legislation that can reduce the use of, and quantity of waste created from the disposal of, single-use carryout paper and plastic bags.

According to WorldWatch Institute, Americans throw away over 100 Billion plastic bags – every year.¹ These bags are not biodegradable, although theoretically they could one day photodegrade with sunlight into smaller and smaller particles. For the 10 billion paper grocery bags used by Americans each year, 14 million trees must be cut down.²

There is more than one way to reduce the use of environmentally destructive single-use bags in Vermont. We have testified multiple times in the past in favor of legislation to place a small tax on single-use bags, for instance. This approach ensures that the state can fund recycling and other environmental initiatives, as outlined in H.88.

Our nation's most populous state, California, has taken a different approach. They have banned the use of most plastic bags, with a similar charge of 10 cents for other single-use bags as outlined in H.105. Over 1,200 businesses, nonprofits, community groups and individuals came out to support the ban.³

While each approach may have its advantages, the committee may want to consider the benefits of beginning with a 5 cent per bag fee as a means of encouraging a broad transition away from single-use bags to reusable ones. This is a policy that many consumers are familiar with already, as some retailers and grocery stores already give a similar price discount to customers who bring their own reusable bags.

If such a policy were enacted, it could be evaluated in two years in order to determine its effectiveness. If the General Assembly felt that additional steps were necessary at that time, a prohibition on the single-use bags could then be considered.

¹ <http://www.worldwatch.org/node/5565>

² <http://www.simpleecology.com/eco/paper-or-plastic-shopping-bags>

³ <http://www.cayeson67.com/body/Yeson67Supporters.pdf>



VPIRG has long supported initiatives to reduce our consumption of and waste from single-use grocery bags. H.105 is a good step in the right direction to protecting consumers and our environment. I thank the Committee for your time today, and for your generous consideration of my testimony. I welcome any questions regarding my testimony either at this time, or at a time of the Committees choosing.