

Albany County's Local Law A: Food Service Waste Reduction Act

**A local law of the County of Albany, NY
regulating the use of polystyrene foam
disposable food service ware and requiring the
use of biodegradable or compostable food
service ware by chain food service
establishments in Albany County**



How did it get passed?

Sewer - San Jose, CA



Each year Americans throw away 25,000,000,000 Styrofoam® cups, enough to circle the earth 436 times.

Source: Harper's Index



According to the EPA about 25% of the volume used up in landfills is by plastics.



photo by Chris Jordan

Albatross chick

Toxic Take-Out



The heat of the food, especially acidic and fatty foods, increases the chance of toxins leaching into your system.



**Heating up your
meal in the
microwave**



**An especially bad
idea if this is juice**

Ban Toxic Take-Out

Environment:

Polystyrene does not bio-degrade, staying in our landfills and sewers for hundreds of years.

Health:

The EPA has designated styrene to be a "reasonably anticipated human carcinogen." The toxic chemicals can leach into our food, water, and soil if it becomes warm or wet. Children and the elderly are especially vulnerable.

Expense:

Unnecessary taxpayer funds are spent managing the polystyrene that fills our trash, landfills and streets. The EPA estimates that styrofoam occupies 25% of our landfills.

Precedent:

Other municipalities such as Washington DC and New York City have found that recycling polystyrene is not cost effective and use biodegradable containers instead.

Employment:

The EPS industries occupy a niche which would be better filled by green employers such as Ecovative in Troy, NY

Energy:

Each cubic foot of polystyrene uses ~ 1 and 1/2 quarts of oil.

Aesthetics:

Polystyrene waste is an eyesore to residents and visitors

Some Details and Challenges

Time Line:

- 2/10 - First EPS ban was introduced at the City level.
- 2/12 - First EPS ban was introduced at the County level.
- 2/12 - Food Service Waste Reduction Act referred to Health and Finance Committee
- 12/12 - City passed a resolution in support of the County ban on EPS
- 8/13 - Favorable referral from the Health Committee (County Health Dept.)
- 10/13 - Referred out of Finance without recommendation
- 11/13 - County passed Local Law A
- 12/13 - County Executive signed the EPS ban with food into law.

Plastics Industry Lobby:

- The Plastics Food Service Group flew in from the mid-west.
- A couple of plastics manufacturers in NYS spoke at the hearings.
- Too much of a burden on small businesses; would cost people their jobs.

Committees:

- Finance Committee needed a fiscal impact statement.
- County Health Dept. needed to figure out enforcement

With many thanks to former city Councilman Anton Konev and County Legislator Doug Bullock for shepherding the bill.

Activism Effort

public support was 5:1 in favor of the ban

- City and County public comment opportunities
- Green, peace, and progressive publications
- Letters to the County Executive and the legislators
- Individual emails and calls to rally public support
- Facebook event postings and announcements
- Flyers with talking points
- Continuous dialog with the major players

EPS Must Be Banned !

Feel free to contact me



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