## TOPIC: Plastic shopping bags should be banned

### PRO

**1 PRO: Case and Contentions** (2nd and 3rd Pro speakers defend these arguments)

**My partners and I support the following topic: Plastic shopping bags should be banned.**

**We define “banned” as:** No longer being used.

#### Contention 1: Environment

#### World is Bad: Plastic bags are bad for the environment

* According to a report from the New Yorker magazine, plastic bags are piling up in landfills, litter streets, and dirty the ocean. They are the 7th most common item collected in the Ocean Conservancy’s International Coastal Cleanup project. This means plastic shopping bags are one of the most commonly polluted items.
* The International Bar Association states that plastic bags in ocean waters are a significant part of a bigger issue of pollution. The toxins in the plastic break down and leak which poisons the water. Animals also mistake the bags to be food and eat them, which makes them sick and unable to eat real food.
* The United Nation’s warned the world of the bad impacts of plastic at its Ocean Conference. They said that by the year 2050 there will be ore plastic in the ocean than fish. They also stated that 99% of all sea birds will consume plastic in their lives.

#### Topic Solves: Banning plastic bags makes the Earth cleaner

* Banning plastic bags from being used means that no one could use them anymore. That would mean less plastic bags thrown out as trash that end up in landfills, streets, and bodies of water like rivers and ocean.
* The City of San Jose in California banned plastic bags in 2016. A report from Wired magazine found that after the ban, there was 89% less plastic bags in the city’s storm drains.
* Even in our state of Washington, we banned plastic shopping bags and replaced them with paper bags. According to the State’s Department of Ecology, the plastic bag ban resulted in less plastic litter in our parks, lakes, rivers, and ocean.

Impact: Plastic pollution harms animals and humans

* According to the United Nations, plastic waste kills 1 million sea birds, 100,000 sea mammals every year. This affects just under half of all the species of sea birds and ocean mammals. That’s a large number of animals in the ocean being hurt by human’s use of plastic.
* Every living thing is connected to each other and the environment. When humans hurt animals and the environment by using plastic, it eventually will hurt us too. For example, if plastic bags get littered everywhere, people will live in a dirty place which won’t be as nice.
* The Conversation magazine reports that when fish consume plastics that break down in the ocean, and humans fish for them for food, humans are eating those plastics too. These are harmful for the health of the fish and our own health.

#### **Contention 2: Health**

#### World is Bad: Plastic bags are bad for human health

* Emily Norton, a director for the Sierra Club explains that plastic is toxic for the environment because, when plastic gets into the ocean, the marine animals consume it, and then it enters human bodies through the eating of those animals.
* This mainly hurts people with less money than others as well as racial minorities. According to UPROSE, many minority and low-income communities depend of food like fish to live and consume a lot of it.
* According to Breastcancer.org, when plastic bags are littered and exposed to heat from the sun, toxic substances are released into the soil, which, can lead to cancerous diseases that get human’s sick.

#### Topic Solves: Banning plastic bags is good for human health

* Eliminating plastic bags would prevent more animals from eating plastic and plastic pollution on our planet which will be good for the health of humans as well as the health of other animals.
* According to the Natural Resources Defense Council, banning plastic bags would limit our exposure to plastics which would be beneficial for our health. Banning plastic bags is a commonsense decision to make ourselves and our planet healthier.

Impact: If we don’t care about our health, people will die

* We are connected to our environment which means that if we don’t ban plastic bags, there will be bad impacts from humans. The Plastic Health Coalition says people will continue to ingest toxic chemicals from plastics which will lead to a risk of cancer either from the soil or from other animals that we eat.
* The NPR news group reports that low-income people who have less money than others, and minority groups like people of different races will be impacted the most of this because they usually eat more fish than other groups and will therefore be more impacted by plastics.

**2 PRO: Responses to CON Arguments**

#### Answering Paper Bags Are Worse:

* Paper bags are better than plastic bags because plastic is not biodegradable which means that, once they are made, they will always make the environment dirty and dangerous according to PBS news group. This means our impact outweighs due to how long it will last.
* Plastic pollution makes the impacts of climate change inevitable because when all of the ocean’s species die from eating too much plastic in the ocean, that would also cause massive environmental damage.
* Paper bags are not be the main cause of climate change. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, the greenhouse gas emissions from the government, major corporations, and vehicles like cars and trucks all cause more emissions than the use of paper bags. This means that impact of climate change is inevitable.

#### Answering 5-cent Bag Fee Counter-Plan:

* The counter-plan is bad for poor people and families—when you’re in poverty or don’t have enough money, every cent counts. Spending more on plastic bags might take away an extra meal they could afford when going grocery shopping.
* According to the Washington Post, charging people for plastic bags would only remove 60% of plastic bags. That’s not good enough to solve the impacts because once plastic enters the environment, it doesn’t decompose and is in the environment forever causing all the issues we talk about in our case.

**1 CON: Case and Contentions** (2nd and 3rd Con speakers defend these arguments)

**My partners and I reject the following topic: Plastic shopping bags should be banned.**

#### Contention 1: Paper Bags are Worse

World is Good: Currently most places don’t use paper shopping bags

* Most places you go shopping in the country use plastic shopping bags. Only some places, like grocery stores in Washington, use paper bags.
* According to a scientific report from the government of Australia, paper bags create more fossil fuel emissions than plastic because paper bags take more energy to produce and transport than plastic bags.
* David Tyler, a professor of chemistry at the University of Oregon, argues that paper bags are worse for the environment than plastic ones. This is because the amount of greenhouse gases that are produced since paper bags are much bulkier than plastic bags, their carbon footprint is bigger due to the cost of transportation.

#### Topic Bad: Paper bags will replace plastic which will be worse for the environment

* BBC News reports that paper bags have been the primary alternative to plastic bags for shopping. Though they have less durability than plastic bags, they decompose quicker, making some believe they’re better for the environment.
* But as our evidence has shown, paper bags need more fossil fuels to create, which means using only paper will bags will be worse for the environment. Even if plastic bags aren’t the best for the environment, it’s better to not have as much fossil fuel pollution affecting our planet.

#### **Impact: Paper bags increases climate change**

* According to the United Nations, scientists have predicted that humans have till the year 2030 to decrease fossil fuel emissions by 50% in order to prevent the worst impacts of climate change. Banning plastic bags to switch to paper bags will make reducing fossil fuel emissions even harder.
* NASA reports if we don’t reduce fossil fuel emissions wherever we can, we will see terrible effects. For example, hotter temperatures will melt the ice caps and glaciers. This will increase sea levels, which will eventually cause cities on the coast of the ocean, like Seattle and New York, to drown underwater. This would be disastrous for millions of lives.

#### Contention 2: Plastic Fee Counter-Plan

There should be a 5-cent bag tax per plastic bag

* Instead of banning plastic bags from being used at all, we propose a counter-plan that anyone who uses a plastic shopping bag should be charged 5 cents for every bag.
* According to Penn State University, the average family uses 20 plastic bags every trip to the grocery store. The counter-plan would cost them an extra $1. This may not seem like a lot, but when this idea has been tested in different cities, it encouraged people to bring their own bags.

The counter-plan solves the affirmative’s impacts

* According to *Wired* magazine, when Washington DC passed a 5-cent bag tax, there was a 60% reduction in the amount of plastic bags used in the city.
* This means that the counter-plan solves most of the impacts of the affirmative’s case. Research from Duke University argues that if lots of plastic bags are bad for the environment, and the counter-plan decreases how much plastic bags are used. That means us, the negative team, solves their impacts too.

The counter-plan alone is better than the affirmative plan

* The counter-plan also allows for plastic bags to still be used which would limit green house gas emissions from more paper bags being made. The tax would also provide funds for city governments to help with clean-up of any litter in the city. According to Plastic Pollution Coalition, the tax money generated from the counter-plan is better than just banning them completely, because the funds can go to cleanup of stuff beyond plastic bags.
* You cannot do the affirmative’s plan and our counter-plan at the same time because you cannot tax something that is being banned.

**2 PRO: Responses to CON Arguments**

#### Answering Environment:

* The Center for Industrial Progress reports that, 80-90% of the population reuses plastic bags at least once. They also found that less than 1% of all litter came from plastic bags. That means that plastic bags aren’t the biggest issue of pollution to the environment.
* If we want to prioritize the environment, we need to prioritize the environment’s greatest threat: climate change. Our first contention proves that paper bags are worse for climate change due to the increased amount of fossil fuel emissions to make them. According to Healthline.org, climate change will impact almost everyone and every species in the environment.
* The counter-plan solves this affirmative contention: we provide a strong incentive to not use plastic bags by taxing them. People will bring their own reusable cloth bags, and therefore less plastic will pollute the Earth.

#### Answering Health:

* The affirmative can’t solve for the impact to human health. Even if they prevent future plastic bags from being produced and used, since the plastic is already in the environment, plastic will continue to poison the environment through the leaking of toxins. That means it will still impact human health.
* Paper bags are worse for people’s health. Paper bags require more fossil fuels to be burned to make them, which contributes to more climate change which also effects more people. According to Harvard University, 1 person out of every 5 people die from air pollution from fossil fuel emissions.
* The counter-plan solves better for health because it is proven that it reduces the amount of plastic bags used for shopping. That means less will be made over time.