



## Memorandum

**Date:** December 9, 2008

**To:** Mayor and City Council

**From:** Suja Lowenthal, Second District  
Patrick O'Donnell, Fourth District

**Subject:** A Day Without a Bag

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### REQUESTED ACTION:

Respectfully request City Council designate December 18<sup>th</sup> as "A Day Without A Bag" in the City of Long Beach to encourage residents and businesses to utilize reusable bags for their holiday and regular shopping needs instead of single-use and paper bags.

Request the City Manager assist in spreading the message to city employees, residents and businesses through existing methods such as e-notify, press, radio, and other media outlets at the City's disposal.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Each year, approximately 6 billion plastic carryout bags are used in Los Angeles County. These disposable bags cost cities in the county up to 17 cents per bag for disposal. At the state level, California spends approximately \$25 million to landfill discarded plastic bags. In United States, less than 5 percent of plastic bags are recycled. With over 380 billion bags being thrown away every year, Americans end up wasting millions of barrels of oil, which is used in the production of single-use bags.

In addition, plastic bags create significant litter problems for our communities and damage our marine environment. According to a study conducted by the U.S. Department of Commerce, over 1 million birds, 100,000 marine animals and countless fish die each year through ingestion of and entanglement in marine debris, which include an increasing number of plastic bags.

Heal the Bay and a coalition of environmental and government organizations are using December 18<sup>th</sup> as a day for encouraging shoppers and businesses to forego use of single-use

bags in favor of reusable bags. The event is intended to empower shoppers to take direct action to eliminate this source of blight and damage in their own community. Reusable bags will be distributed by coalition members at selected retail centers and one-on-one education will inform shoppers about ways to reduce their reliance on harmful products. Bringing greater attention to the impact of plastic single-use bags and educating the public about convenient and viable alternatives is particularly important for a coastal city like Long Beach, due to the significant amount of litter that gets deposited on our beaches and hung up in our harbors and marinas from the Los Angeles River.

The City Council's Environmental Committee considered the issue of plastic bags, concurring with staff's series of recommendations to address this issue. The recommendations included promoting the use of reusable bags, monitoring plastic bag recycling programs and considering a ban of plastic bags following a one-year period.

For more information about "A Day Without a Bag", please go to the following website:

<http://www.healthebay.org/nobagday/2008/about.asp>.