





Date: June 5, 2007

**R-31**

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Patrick O'Donnell, Fourth District   
Vice Mayor Bonnie Lowenthal, First District 

Subject: **Citywide Polystyrene Policy**

---

Among Long Beach's numerous environmental goals is sustainability. The City Council and staff has recently undertaken efforts to promote "green" building standards in its municipal facilities and private development. Additionally, the City utilizes aggressive litter abatement and awareness campaigns and a progressive recycling program. In these efforts, the City sets a positive example for its community and employees.

A major component of Long Beach's debris is expendable polystyrene products. Polystyrene, commonly known as Styrofoam, is not biodegradable, can have a lifespan of up to one hundred years and is extremely difficult to recycle. The weight of polystyrene can cause it to float away easily or break into several smaller pieces, constituting a litter and ocean pollution issue. Many major restaurant chains and stores have discontinued the use of Styrofoam packaging. It is still used in several applications, including coffee cups, disposable utensils and packaging.

At the December 13, 2005 City Council meeting, a report was requested on the feasibility of eliminating the use of polystyrene from the City Hall cafeteria, municipal facilities and City-sponsored events. A report was submitted to Council from the City Manager on June 5, 2006. It was found that an elimination of these polystyrene applications could be achieved through the use of future purchase orders and contracts, as well as alternative packaging, with little fiscal impact. The City of Santa Monica recently voted to ban polystyrene throughout the entire city.

Any potential ban of polystyrene products involves several complicated issues including expense, waste and consumer behavior. In an effort to expand sustainability efforts, the City should, at the committee level, examine the impacts of polystyrene and the potential of phasing out the use of this product citywide. Other cities in our region have this policy under study as well. Any policy developed should allow for the input of affected stakeholders and would likely be incremental.

**Recommendation: Refer a discussion of polystyrene to the Environmental Committee with the goal of returning to Council with recommended action to address polystyrene use and related issues. Discussion should include, but is not limited to, recycling programs, best practices in neighboring cities, and limiting the use of polystyrene citywide.**