



February 4, 2015

The Honorable Ted Kennedy and James Albis
Co-Chairs, Joint Committee on Environment
Connecticut General Assembly
Legislative Office Building, Room 3200
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Chairmen Kennedy and Albis:

On behalf of the American Forest & Paper Associationⁱ (AF&PA) and the Renewable Bag Councilⁱⁱ (RBC), we appreciate the opportunity to share our perspective on legislation under consideration by the Committee on Raised Bill 349, which would impose a 10 cent tax on single-use carryout bags and place onerous requirements on the classification of recycled paper bags. AF&PA and the RBC are active on this issue in states and localities across the country. We believe that all paper bags should be excluded from measures to tax retail bags on grounds that they wrongfully penalize our product—a commodity that is highly recycled, recyclable, compostable, and renewable. **We respectfully oppose this bill and urge you to amend it to remove mandated taxes on any type of paper bags and the requirements for qualification as a recycled paper bag.**

Offering a paper bag free of charge at the point of purchase is a natural part of customer service. Many services are included in the price of the goods consumers already buy: rent, electricity, insurance, employee wages. Once there is an obligation to pay fees for bags, those fees are likely to increase over time.

The bill defines “recycled paper bag” by specifying that each bag contain 40 percent “post consumer” recycled content. The “post-consumer” qualifier is a distinction without a difference. It only serves to draw attention away from the important fact that materials from every step in the paper production process can, and are, being recycled and reused instead of being placed in a landfill.

Consumers who are sensitive to environmental concerns choose paper bags. Responding to consumer demands, many retailers have already voluntarily transitioned to paper. Not only are paper bags made from recycled paper, they are highly recycled themselves and are a fixture in community recycling programs throughout the state and the rest of the country. In fact, Connecticut residents frequently use paper bags as their containers when recycling other paper products such as newspapers, magazines, envelopes, juice and milk cartons, and printer paper—all items that are accepted at the curb in the state. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the paper bag boasts a national recycling rate of nearly 50 percent. More than 60 percent of paper consumed in the U.S. has been recovered for recycling in each of the last three years – and exceeded 65 percent in 2012.

The RBC and AF&PA are also concerned with the definition’s reference to “old growth” fiber as this term has no silvicultural or legal meaning. From a practical perspective, using older, high value trees as furnish to make bags would not be economically feasible. The other problem for

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our members is that there is no way to certify that our bags are compliant with an “old growth” prohibition given that there is no definition.

From a raw material perspective, paper bags are made from a renewable resource. The paper bag is made from a renewable resource – managed forests – that provides habitat for animals and removes large amounts of carbon dioxide from the air we breathe. Today the U.S. has 20 percent more trees than it did on the first Earth Day celebration more than 40 years ago. One-third of the U.S. is forested - 751 million acres. Privately owned forests supply 91 percent of the wood harvested in the U.S.

We encourage the Committee to avoid measures that penalize paper and, as always, we stand ready to assist you and offer our expertise as a resource as you begin to shape policy on this important issue.

For additional information, please contact Abigail Turner, Manager of State Government Affairs, AF&PA at (202) 463-2596 or abigail_turner@afandpa.org.

Sincerely,



Cathy Foley
Group Vice President

Cc:
Committee on Environment

ⁱ The American Forest & Paper Association (AF&PA) serves to advance a sustainable U.S. pulp, paper, packaging, and wood products manufacturing industry through fact-based public policy and marketplace advocacy. AF&PA member companies make products essential for everyday life from renewable and recyclable resources and are committed to continuous improvement through the industry’s sustainability initiative - [Better Practices, Better Planet 2020](#). The forest products industry accounts for nearly 4 percent of the total U.S. manufacturing GDP, manufactures approximately \$210 billion in products annually, and employs nearly 900,000 men and women. The industry meets a payroll of approximately \$50 billion annually and is among the top 10 manufacturing sector employers in 47 states. In Connecticut, the industry employs over 3,500 individuals, with an annual payroll of over \$250 million. Visit AF&PA online at www.afandpa.org or follow us on Twitter [@ForestandPaper](https://twitter.com/ForestandPaper).

ⁱⁱ The Renewable Bag Council (RBC) is comprised of manufacturers and converters of renewable, recycled, recyclable, and compostable Kraft paper used for checkout bags at grocery and retail outlets throughout Washington and across the United States. The RBC is affiliated with the American Forest & Paper Association (AF&PA). Visit the RBC online at www.renewablebag.org or follow us on Twitter [@renewablebag](https://twitter.com/renewablebag).