



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Tips for Reducing Plastic Bag Use

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Starting March 1, 2020, a new bag waste reduction law will take effect in New York State - where over 23 billion plastic bags are typically used each year.

## What is the New Law?

Starting Sunday, March 1, 2020, most businesses will stop handing out single-use plastic bags. The Bag Waste Reduction Law applies to more than just grocery stores. Whether you're going to the grocery store, clothes shopping, or to a home improvement store, make sure to bring your reusable bags.

## Are there exceptions?

Some bags are **exempt** under the law, so plastic bags may still be distributed to consumers in a few specific circumstances, such as a bag used by a pharmacy to carry prescription drugs, and produce bags for bulk items such as fruits and vegetables.

## What Types of Bags Can I Use?

Shoppers may bring any type of bag to the store with them. However, there are many environmentally friendly alternatives to plastic bags. Ideally, a bag should be washable and designed for multiple uses, such as one made from cloth. If you forget to bring a bag with you, many retailers will have reusable bags for sale. An alternative, such as paper, may also be available. Please note that stores are not required to have bags available for customers. Some stores may choose not to switch to paper and may only have reusable bags for purchase. That is why it is important for consumers to **#BYOBagNY - Bring Your Own Bag**. If you have a small purchase, such as a magazine, candy or drink, you can help our environment by saying "No thank you" to a single use paper bag and carrying the item instead.

## Will I Be Charged for Paper Bags?

Counties and cities may choose to opt in to a 5-cent government fee on paper bags. **Nassau County** has opted out, meaning you won't have to pay a 5-cent fee. **Suffolk County** has opted in to the charge. The 5-cent government fee will go to local and state government, with 3 cents to a state environmental fund and 2 cents to county funds for reusable bags.

## **Where Can I Get Reusable Bags?**

Many retailers sell them. **The Department of Environmental Conservation** will be distributing free reusable bags at libraries, food pantries and other locations. Email DEC at [plasticbags@dec.ny.gov](mailto:plasticbags@dec.ny.gov) for information.

## **I Use Plastic Bags to Get Rid of Kitty Litter Or Other Icky Garbage. What Should I Do?**

Luckily, there are environmentally friendly alternatives for this dilemma! Biodegradable litter bags are available in bulk from many retailers. You can also save the plastic wrapping from other household items (like paper towels, vegetable bags, etc.) to use for this purpose.

**For more information, visit the [Department of Environmental Conservation's webpage](#).**