

NYC artists design totes highlighting the importance of reducing plastic waste

Vote with Your Tote is a project launched by a pro bono team of top creatives and environmental experts that partners with local bodega owners and artists to design totes and remind Governor Andrew Cuomo about the importance of a carryout bag fee.



Vote with Your Tote project. Image supplied.

Last year, the governor killed NYC's plastic-bag law. Last week, he announced a plastic bag ban bill that would pre-empt bag fees and nullify successful policies that have gone into effect in Suffolk County, New Castle, and other localities across the state.

Bad environmental policy

Papel & Caneta, a non-profit collective of leading ad industry creatives recently teamed up with five New York City bodega owners to launch "Vote with Your Tote". The group paired each shop with a local artist to design a custom bag, which each retailer then passed along to customers. As people made purchases, the bodega owners shared the environmental impact of plastic bags and encouraged shoppers to make the shift to reusable totes. The team also created a video to highlight the importance of reducing plastic waste and send a message to Governor Andrew Cuomo that New York needs a bag fee — not just a bag ban.

"A plastic bag ban with no fee on paper bags sounds good, but it's bad environmental policy. It will not reduce solid waste, because it gives no incentive for people to switch to reusable bags. At best, it will lead to a massive increase in paper bags, most of which are not recycled. Retailers will be hit hard, since paper bags cost five times as much as plastic bags. When Chicago and Hawaii tried to implement plastic bag bans recently, stores simply found a way around them, giving out thicker plastic bags by claiming they were reusable. Chicago and Honolulu recently scrapped their bans in favour of a fee on all carryout bags," says Brad Lander, Brooklyn city council member.



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Marcus 'The Maltese Falcon' Brewster 27 Apr 2018



Fully-immersive experience

Over the course of a two-day, fully-immersive experience, Jennie Romer, a national expert on carryout bag policy and founder of PlasticBagLaws.org, worked with Papel & Caneta to creatively approach this issue. Weji Ma and Jenn Laura Lee, New York University professors who are also part of a group called ScaAN (Scientist Action and Advocacy Network), and experienced professionals in New York public politics such as Eric Goldstein, Josh Kleinberg, and Brad Lander were also part of the immersion.

Also, every time someone hits the like button on Youtube, a twitter bot sends a tweet to Cuomo as a reminder for him to join forces with NYS Senators Liz Krueger and Brad Hoylman, and NYS Assembly Environment Chair Steve Englebright, and support their recently-introduced bill to combine a statewide plastic ban with a small fee on paper/reusable bags.

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