

# Grading the Science

## The Center for Biological Diversity petition for federal government reduction of plastic use will only hurt environment, government budget.

CLAIM	GRADE	FACT
<p><b>Emissions:</b> “These [single-use] plastics cause serious environmental problems at every step of their lifecycle and are decidedly not ‘sustainable.’”</p>	<b>D</b>	<p>Compared to alternatives, plastics have a <a href="#">lower environmental footprint at every step of their life cycle</a>, from sourcing to end-of-life.</p> <p>Due to weight, glass bottles require <a href="#">40% more energy</a> than plastics for transportation, resulting in higher emissions. Replacing plastic bottles with glass would result in CO2 emissions equivalent to <a href="#">22 coal-fired power plants</a>.</p>
<p><b>Emissions:</b> “In total, almost half of all plastic produced is designed to be used only once—and then thrown away.”</p>	<b>C</b>	<p>While many plastic products are <a href="#">designed for single-use</a>, many are used multiple times, which further reduces their environmental footprint, especially compared to alternatives. Single-use plastic bags for example are generally used at least once more as <a href="#">trash can liners, pet pick up bags or lunch bags</a>. <a href="#">Plastic cups and durable plastic takeout containers</a> can also be used more than once, further reducing their environmental footprint.</p> <p>Transitioning to alternative materials for packaging or single-use products would result in a <a href="#">higher environmental impact</a>, including <a href="#">higher emissions</a>.</p>
<p><b>Environment:</b> “Plastic production fuels the climate crisis and damages local communities with toxic air and water pollution. Once discarded, plastic clogs rivers and oceans, harms wildlife, infiltrates drinking water, and persists in the environment for centuries.”</p>	<b>D</b>	<p>Using plastics actually reduces strain on the environment by reducing the use of other more <a href="#">environmentally degradative materials like glass, metals and paperboard</a>. Coupled with the appropriate recycling resources, plastic production is a solution to environmental concerns.</p> <p>However, the plastics industry recognizes that plastics in the environment is a problem, and has invested billions in product innovation, consumer education and waste management solutions to build a greener, more circular future. For example, <a href="#">ExxonMobil</a> is building one of the largest advanced recycling facilities in North America, while <a href="#">consumer brands</a> including <a href="#">Coca Cola</a> are redesigning bottles to be more easily recycled or manufactured from recycled material.</p> <p>Industry initiatives like <a href="#">Operation Clean Sweep</a>, the <a href="#">Microplastics Advanced Research and Innovation Initiative (MARII)</a>, and <a href="#">Zero Net Waste</a> are also actively working to address waste in the environment and waterways and implement innovative new solutions and designs that make plastic products more circular.</p>
<p><b>Environment:</b> “As people consume more and more food and drinks from single-use plastic wrappers and containers, they’re exposed to chemicals linked to many of today’s worst health crises, including obesity, ADD/ADHD, and many forms of cancer.”</p>	<b>F</b>	<p>Wrong. In fact, plastics used in <a href="#">food and beverage packaging are heavily regulated</a> and undergo rigorous testing to ensure it’s safe for food-specific use.</p> <p>Despite attacking plastics, the Center for Biological Diversity undermines its unfounded claims about the dangers of plastics by correctly recommending that plastic continue to be used in “disaster recovery, medical use, and personal protective equipment.” Plastic saves lives every day in the <a href="#">healthcare sector</a> and during disaster events, treatment for these essential materials should not be any different for <a href="#">food and packaging</a> or other uses.</p>

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<p><b>Economics:</b> “The federal government’s huge purchasing power is crucial to protecting our environment and health from plastic pollution.”</p>	<b>D</b>	<p>In lieu of record-high inflation and ever rising consumer prices coupled with significant supply chain disruptions, <a href="#">spending millions of dollars</a> on switching to more environmentally harmful materials is not a good use of government resources.</p> <p>Alternative materials, like glass, aluminum or paperboard cost more to produce, from both an environmental and financial standpoint, and are more expensive to <a href="#">transport after manufacture</a>. For example, switching to heavier alternatives like glass or aluminum could <a href="#">increase transportation costs up to five times</a> per bottle/can. This would skyrocket federal costs for beverages in vending machines and food halls in government buildings alone.</p> <p>The government does have the power to protect our environment and health from plastics, but by investing in recycling and healthy end-of-life markets, not bans that will do nothing to address real challenges.</p>
<p><b>Economics:</b> “The federal government does not need to purchase single-use plastics... environmentally-preferable alternatives to single-use plastics exist and are readily available... Therefore, the report recommends policymakers to promote reusable products.”</p>	<b>F</b>	<p>Single-use products are <a href="#">important for the government</a> to function, from food service and vending machines to medical and safety purposes to automobiles and airplanes. The Center for Biological Diversity says so itself when calling for single-use plastics to still be used for “disaster recovery, medical use, and personal protective equipment.” Meaning the federal government does need to purchase single-use plastics.</p> <p>Plastic is one of the most sustainable and environmentally friendly options for the government when compared to alternatives like metal, glass and paperboard, which are heavier, require more energy, water and resources to produce and are more expensive. While reusable products can be good substitutes in some situations, <a href="#">reusable alternatives require constant washing</a> and without proper washing spaces, can lead to food and beverage borne illnesses.</p> <p>Plastics are also affordable and versatile enough to exist beyond original designation, and <a href="#">single-use plastics</a> can increase access while also reducing the environmental footprint of products made with alternative materials.</p>