

## Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act

By Jim McGalliard

Too often, it's difficult to determine the ground truth about proposed environmental actions, particularly when there are complex or controversial economic, scientific, engineering, or social justice issues entangled with a proposed action. The March issue of the UoG Social Justice Team newsletter included a link to a Washington Post story about the recent passage of a Montgomery County Zoning Amendment for the increased installation of solar panels in the Agricultural Reserve after it had been revised to provide for increased county government oversight of such installations. The original Zoning Amendment had been supported by the Sierra Club but opposed by multiple local churches. The February SJT newsletter included links to articles both supporting and opposing the solar panels zoning amendment as originally formulated.

Comes now the “Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act” before the U.S. Congress, supported by many Democrats but opposed, so far, by Republicans. Decades long efforts to recycle plastic have been catastrophic - with most plastic never recycled; a lot of plastic “thermally recycled” – that is, by burning the plastic to generate electricity but avoid dumping it in the ocean, and also polluting the air; shipping the plastic waste overseas to be buried or burned; processes to recycle plastic that only allow recycling a few times before the result is no longer useful; misleading advertising about recycling sponsored by the oil and gas industries that have strong financial incentives to increase the production of new plastic; stories about how animals eat and are poisoned by human plastic waste; stories about how our own bodies are full of tiny plastic particles; and other problems.

The Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act has been re-introduced in 2021 in a version that adds language to a 2020 version and that provides multiple avenues for reducing plastic use, doing recycling better, and holding industry more accountable for the environmental consequences of their products. The Act strives to phase out throwaway utensils made from fossil fuels, sets recycled content requirements, hold the plastic industry responsible for its waste, pauses construction of new plastic-making plants, and takes other actions.

## What *The Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act* Will Accomplish:



An article published by WasteDive (see the link below) states that 400 environmental groups have endorsed the Act, and I have also included links to supporting statements from the Ocean Conservancy and GreenPeace. The Plastics Industry Association is opposed to the Act, as is the American Chemistry Council, primarily with respect to limits on the construction of new plastic making plants and arguing on the basis of economics and other factors.

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/5845?s=1&r=84>

<https://www.greenpeace.org/usa/congress-support-the-break-free-from-plastic-pollution-act-of-2021/>

<https://oceanconservancy.org/news/statements-break-free-plastic-pollution-act-bold-necessary-path-forward-tackle-plastic-pollution/>

<https://www.wastedive.com/news/break-free-from-plastic-pollution-act-reintroduced/597338/>

<https://www.waste360.com/legislation-regulation/epr-debate-heats-break-free-plastic-pollution-act-enters-congress>