

Editorial: Calif. surviving with plastic bag ban

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It's been a year since Californian banned most stores from handing out flimsy, single-use plastic bags to customers. It was the first, and remains the only, U.S. state to do so. But guess what? In the end, this momentous change was not a big deal. Shoppers did not revolt or launch recall campaigns against state lawmakers. Food still gets to people's houses. Reusable bags did not spark an epidemic of food-borne illnesses, as some critics suggested they would. Consumers didn't go broke paying 10 cents apiece for the thicker, reusable plastic bags stores are allowed to distribute instead.

For the most part, Californians took in stride the sudden absence of some 13 billion bags that in previous years were handed out at grocery checkout counters and by other retailers of all sorts. Maybe a few grumbled at first about the inconvenience. But most adjusted quickly, perhaps because they intuited that something was not right about all those plastic bags hanging from trees, caught up in storm drains, clumped by the sides of freeways and floating in the ocean.

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