

News Alert

Rensselaer County Legislature Office of the Minority 270-2892

September 4, 2008

GOP Skirts Responsibility for Environmental Legislation

Troy—Legislators Peter Grimm and Flora Fasoldt introduced a local law at the August legislative meeting that calls for the recycling of plastic bags at chain stores of 10,000 square feet or more. To their disappointment, the Republican members of the Environmental Committee defeated the legislation at Tuesday’s meeting. Albany County has already passed this law unanimously along with four other counties and New York City.

“I was dismayed to hear the Republican Majority dodge responsibility for bag recycling in Rensselaer County, saying they would rather wait for the State to enact a law. They complain about state mandates, but aren’t prepared to take responsibility for this cost effective way to save petroleum and reduce pollution in our neighborhoods and waterways,” said Grimm.

Both Hannaford and Price Chopper have already voluntarily initiated recycling programs and have bins near their bottle recycling centers. No additional costs would be generated for grocery shoppers. As part of the legislation Grimm and Fasoldt introduced, the County would take responsibility for raising awareness of the problems with out-of-control plastic bag consumption and encouraging recycling and alternative solutions. Cost savings are calculated with growing participation among shoppers who return their used plastic bags.

“The Republican Majority’s claim is that establishing a bag recycling program will cost consumers. They need to do their homework better and give people more credit. People want to do the right thing to care for our communities, our waterways—the environment. This is a voluntary program that works and that, as leaders, we should support. It gives residents the opportunity to deposit bags in a recycling bin when they shop instead of throwing them out and adding to the many costs of litter and pollution,” remarked Legislator Flora Fasoldt.

According to the EPA, the U.S. consumes over 380 billion plastic bags, sacks and wraps each year. Plastics do not biodegrade. When exposed to light they break down into smaller and smaller pieces that contaminate our soil and water.

“As elected officials, we are charged with leadership and responsibility. Local initiatives are key to future solutions,” Grimm commented. “Through our actions we can empower people with sensible ideas and tools. We need to provide options and raise awareness, not wait for the state to do our job for us.”