

Big Island of Hawai'i Latest to Ban Plastic Bags



By [Scott Cooney](#) | January 19th, 2012 [6 Comments](#)

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In December, the Hawai'i County Council [passed a bill banning the use of plastic bags](#) on what is known as the "Big Island" of Hawai'i. Yesterday, Mayor Billy Kenoi signed the bill into law. Kenoi had the option to simply abstain and let the bill pass into law, but his signature adds political credibility to the increasing trend of plastic bag bans across the world.



The Big Island now joins the islands of Maui and Kauai in the ban of plastic bags. Honolulu County, which contains the island of Oahu, where the majority of the population of the state of Hawai'i lives, has struggled to pass similar legislation, though a new version of a bill that has not passed yet will come before the county council this year.

Kenoi acknowledged plastic bags often become litter when he said, "this bill holds the promise of keeping our island clean, healthy and safe, and we need to finish the job."

Some businesses have misgivings, citing the extra cost of providing paper bags to customers. Realistically, however, businesses are best at reducing costs. With the level playing field of having no plastic bags allowed, businesses might now consider charging 5 or 10 cents for each paper bag given, and providing real incentives for shoppers to bring their own bags.

The bill won't take effect until January 17, 2013, and businesses on the Big Island will still be able to give plastic bags for one additional year, the extra time given to allow businesses to get rid of any inventory they have and not get stuck with them.

About the author:



Scott Cooney is the author of *Build a Green Small Business* (McGraw-Hill) and developer of **GBO Hawai'i, the green economy board game!** Fend off oil industry lobbyists, navigate unpredictable public policy, and help Hawai'i grow sustainable food, cut waste, and generate clean energy! Best Triple Bottom Line Return on Investment wins!

