



OFFICE OF COUNCILMEMBER CHRISTOPHER WARD THIRD COUNCIL DISTRICT

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Councilmember Ward Introduces a Proposed Measure to Reduce Single-use Plastics and Styrofoam (Expanded Polystyrene)

SAN DIEGO, CA – San Diego Councilmember Chris Ward (District Three) issued the following statement after a joint press conference with Council President Pro Tem Barbara Bry (District One), environmental advocates and local businesses to announce proposed regulations that would place restrictions on the use of Styrofoam (also known as expanded polystyrene or EPS) in San Diego.

“Working with business and environmental stakeholders I have introduced a proposal that will keep expanded polystyrene and single-use plastics out of our waterways and away from our precious coastline.

“It’s time San Diego joins over a hundred cities throughout California that have already banned these harmful environmental pollutants and moves forward toward a more sustainable future.”

The proposed measure would restrict the sale and distribution of expanded polystyrene (EPS) products for the use of food service ware, fish and meat trays, egg cartons, coolers, and beach toys in the City of San Diego. Under this ordinance, prepared food, such as that distributed through take-out menu items, may not be distributed, or available for purchase, in or on products that contain EPS.

“Polystyrene food take-out containers are not recyclable and pervasive within our community,” said Michael Torti, Executive Committee Chair of the Surfrider Foundation San Diego Chapter. “Surfrider Foundation volunteers collected 12,575 pieces of this type of single-use plastic waste from San Diego beaches in 2017 alone. Surfrider Foundation strongly supports the City of San Diego in banning polystyrene food take-out containers.”

The negative impacts of EPS are permanent, threatening the health of San Diegans, wildlife, and industries critical to our region. EPS does not biodegrade; rather it photodegrades — breaking down into smaller pieces which are easily mistaken for food by marine wildlife. EPS is also one of the most

abundant forms of marine and terrestrial litter found along roadways and beaches—further increasing the risks associated with this product.

"Expanded polystyrene's non-degradable nature threatens the environmental health of our beautiful beaches and unique coastal lands," stated Council President Pro Tem Barabara Bry.

San Diego's Climate Action Plan - widely lauded as a national model - includes a keystone goal of achieving zero waste by the year 2040. Addressing the Styrofoam products in our environment and landfills is a critical step to achieving this goal.

"Our growing reliance on disposable plastic to fuel our 'culture of convenience' is not without cost. Globally, an average of eight million tons of plastic ends up in the ocean," added Roger Kube, Policy Advisor with the 5 Gyres Institute. "Once there, sunlight and currents shred plastic debris into smaller particles called microplastics, which absorb and concentrate toxic chemicals up the marine food chain and into our bodies. From plankton to fish, and to humans that eat seafood, plastic pollution is changing the very chemistry of life."

The policy would provide consumers safe alternatives to EPS that will not cause harm to human health or our waterways, beaches, and oceans. As proposed, the City's Environmental Services Department would provide a list of acceptable and affordable alternatives to EPS products, as well as develop a process to phase implementation of this ordinance to limit impact on small businesses.

"The convenience of a cold soda does not outweigh the necessity of a healthy planet. As business owners we need a level playing field where our priorities are the long-term health of our customers and employees," said Mikey Knab, founding Chair of Business for Good San Diego.

The proposed policy will also extend to the retail sale of food ware that contains EPS, including plates, cups, and utensils. These products, along with coolers containing EPS, are frequently used at picnics in our parks and beaches and due to proximity, disposal may result in the food ware reaching our waterways.

In his formal memo on the proposed ordinance, Councilmember Ward has requested that the City Council's Rules Committee consider the proposal and direct the proposal for appropriate further review.

For more information or to interview Councilmember Ward, contact Ansermio Jake Estrada at (619) 909-4299 or EstradaAJ@sandiego.gov

Councilmember Chris Ward represents San Diego's Third Council District including communities of Downtown, Little Italy, Bankers Hill, Mission Hills, Middletown, Hillcrest, University Heights, North Park, Normal Heights, Old Town, South Park, and Golden Hill.

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