

# Break Free *from* Plastic Pollution

"The Great Lakes provide drinking water for more than 40 million Americans, yet an estimated 22 million pounds of plastics enter the Great Lakes annually and the level of microplastics in the Great Lakes is higher than plastic concentrations found in the highly publicized Pacific Garbage Patch. Plastic pollution in our waters is a significant threat to human health and our environment. The Break Free From Plastics Pollution Act of 2023, being introduced by Sen. Jeff Merkley, which includes Senator Durbin's recently introduced Plastic Pellet Free Waters Act, provides a comprehensive approach to plastics pollution that reduces the production and use of single-use plastics and appropriately increases the responsibility of plastic producers to prevent plastics pollution from entering our waterways and our environment," **said Molly Flanagan, Chief Operating Officer, Alliance for the Great Lakes.**

"As more and more businesses are demonstrating, there are incredible opportunities for businesses to reduce plastic pollution and create a more circular economy. As these businesses move to reduce their impact, we see the opportunities for innovation and job growth that are possible without sacrificing our environment or our health. The need to reduce plastics pollution is clear. On behalf of our business community, we support the goals of the Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act and would see its passage as a win for our economy and a win for our environment," **said David Levine, President, American Sustainable Business Council.**

"Plastic pollution is petrochemical pollution and it's hurting families right here in the United States. Companies continue to pile onto our country's plastic pollution problem without taking any responsibility or being held to account. This legislation will begin to change that. While plastic packaging, bottles, and bags may be the most visible, the waste and pollution created by the petrochemical plants manufacturing these products is harming the communities around them and fueling the climate crisis. We thank Sen. Merkley and Rep. Huffman for their leadership in advancing the *Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act*," **said Heather McTeer Toney, Executive Director of Beyond Petrochemicals.**

"Plastic production and plastic pollution are causing major health and environmental problems across the United States. Plastics recycling has been an abysmal failure and the only effective solution is to significantly reduce the production, use, and disposal of plastics. The toxic train derailment in East Palestine, Ohio stands as a stark reminder that it is dangerous to transport vinyl chloride and other toxic chemicals used to make plastic on our nation's rickety rail system. The Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act is a vitally important bill that will solve many of the problems associated with plastics," **said Judith Enck, former EPA Regional Administrator and President of Beyond Plastics.**



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“Plastic is made of fossil fuels. It pollutes the environment, contributes to climate change, and devastates wildlife. We need to ditch our addiction to single-use plastic and transition to reusable systems. The health of people and the planet depend on it,” **said Kelley Dennings, Center for Biological Diversity.**

“It is long past time for every member of Congress to stand with frontline communities by breaking free from plastic pollution. We, as a nation, can do this, and we must – for the sake of environmental justice, our health, and our climate. Earthjustice is grateful for the continued leadership of Senator Merkley and Congressman Huffman on this immensely important issue,” **said Daniel Savery, Senior Legislative Representative at Earthjustice.**

“Our addiction to plastic is responsible for country-sized, swirling gyres of plastic waste in our oceans and growing landfills across the world. It's harming wildlife and finding its way into our water, our air, our food and our bodies. We are happy to see Senator Merkley bringing back the Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act this year. This ambitious bill outlines a comprehensive solution for this growing environmental problem, and would help us build a future where we put our planet and public health over convenience,” **said Environment America's zero waste program director and state director of Environment Oregon Celeste Meiffren-Swango.**

“The Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act provides an avenue to not only protect our pristine ocean and waterways, but also our comunidades from harmful toxins in our water, air, soil and ocean. The BFFPPA will not only reduce single-use plastics and packaging, but outlines sustainable alternatives while holding producers accountable and stopping plastic pollution at its source.

The petrochemical industry, plastic production facilities, and incinerators disproportionately affect Latine, Black, and Indigenous communities who are underrepresented in decision making as related to public health and the environment. Through the inclusion of language justice requirements, the BFFPPA outlines the importance of including said communities in decision-making processes. The Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act of 2023 will tackle the crisis of plastic pollution and transform waste and recycling management in the United States, emphasizing the need to protect frontline communities in rural and urban regions, and ensure environmental justice is at the forefront,” **said Val Schull, Green Latinos.**

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“We commend Sen. Jeff Merkley and Rep. Jared Huffman for the Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act. Our over-reliance on plastics is bad for our health, air quality, the climate, local waterways, and the oceans, and particularly for those low-wealth communities and communities of color who bear the brunt of air, water, and climate pollution from fossil fueled production. Nothing we use for a minute should pollute our environment for hundreds of years. It’s time for us to reduce the use of plastics, increase recycling, and maximize the use of recycled materials,” **said Matthew Davis, Vice President of Federal Policy for the League of Conservation Voters.**

“We’re inundated by plastic waste, yet more plastic is made each year, harming our planet, health and well-being. The Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act is based on successful plastic pollution reduction policies in states and across the globe. The bill addresses our problem at the source by reducing the amount of disposable plastic we use, and encouraging a shift toward better and reusable materials. For our children to inherit a less-polluted Earth, that’s exactly what we need,” **said Janet Domenitz, executive director of MASSPIRG.**

“Plastics are made of fossil fuels combined with PFAS, phthalates, heavy metals and other toxic chemicals. They are produced in some of the nation’s most overburdened and underserved communities, blanketing neighborhoods in carcinogenic air pollution. Many plastics are used for mere minutes, but their impact can leave a mark for centuries to come. Plastics are piling up in our landfills and oceans, incinerators are turning waste plastics into toxic air pollutants, and consumer products are leaching chemicals into our bodies. Microplastics are found in the air we breathe, the food we eat, and the water we drink. They have been found deep in human lungs and in the bodies of newborn babies. By restricting the most problematic single-use plastic products, investing in reuse and refill systems, and insisting on robust protections for frontline communities, the Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act seeks to protect people at every stage of the plastics supply chain and to set this country on a healthier and more sustainable path forward. We applaud its reintroduction and thank Senator Merkley and Representative Huffman for their leadership on this issue,” **said Dominique Browning, Director and Co-Founder, Moms Clean Air Force.**

We’re at a crisis point with plastic pollution and we need action. Plastic pollution harms our oceans, climate, communities, and wildlife. The solution is to stop plastic pollution at the source by reducing the production and use of unnecessary single-use plastic and move to refillable and reusable systems. The Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act does just that. We applaud Senator Merkley, Congressman Huffman, and their colleagues for introducing this important bill. Cities and states have been leading the way on plastic reduction policies, and it’s time for federal action so we can turn the tide on plastic pollution before it’s too late,” **said Christy Leavitt, campaign director at Oceana.**



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“With more than a garbage truck’s worth of plastic entering our ocean every minute, it’s no secret that we need systemic action to turn the tide on this crisis; and with the U.S. generating the most plastic waste of any country in the world, we know this action must start at home. With strengthened provisions for reducing single-use plastics, support for reuse and refill systems, and stronger enforcement and accountability for polluters, we are thrilled to see the latest version of the Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act build on the success of states like California and Oregon to push the U.S. towards the type of ambitious and bold action that our ocean needs,” **said Dr. Anja Brandon, Associate Director of U.S. Plastics Policy at Ocean Conservancy.**

“The reintroduced Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act includes stronger regulations on toxic chemicals, bans many wasteful single-use plastics, and supports reuse and refill systems. As the biggest plastic producer in the world, the U.S. must take responsibility for its mass production, consumption, and export of plastic pollution and its harmful impacts on a global scale. Passing this Act would be a great start,” **said Julia Cohen, Co-Founder and Managing Director, Plastic Pollution Coalition.**

“We can't continue to just talk about the problems caused by plastic pollution. We need to act now to protect human health and the health of our ocean. We need to act now to slow the contribution of plastic production to climate change. We need to act now to hold plastic manufacturers accountable for the unnecessary toxic products they create. We need a practical, equitable solution: We need the Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act. The Surfrider Foundation urges everyone to support this legislation ensuring a better future for our planet,” **said Jennifer Savage, Plastic Pollution Initiative Senior Manager, Surfrider Foundation.**

“The reintroduced Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act of 2023 continues to be a pragmatic and practical comprehensive National plastic policy, based on proven successful local and state policies. It is the baseline federal approach to fully address the plastic pollution crisis from fossil fuel extraction to waste. The Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act would be the basis of a National plastic pollution regulatory program that would signal a stronger commitment from the U.S. towards a successful and legally binding UN Plastics Treaty,” **said Jackie Nuñez, Founder, The Last Plastic Straw, Advocacy & Engagement Manager, Plastic Pollution Coalition.**

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"Plastic pollution is one of the most significant environmental challenges facing our planet. From the high demand for unnecessary virgin plastic to ineffective waste management practices, the broken and complex system that has led us to where we are today requires significant improvements. The Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act would help make our nation's practices more sustainable by reducing plastic production at the source, implementing producer responsibility, and advancing environmental justice. WWF thanks Senator Merkley and Representative Huffman for introducing legislation that would pave the way for solving this growing challenge," **said Alejandro Pérez, WWF, Senior Vice President, Policy and Government Affairs.**

"As an organization that has been at the forefront of plastic pollution research for over 15 years, we understand the scale of this issue and the urgency with which we must act. The 5 Gyres Institute commends Senator Merkley for listening to the science. This bill will protect our ocean, communities, and climate," **said Alison Waliszewski, Director of Policy and Programs, 5 Gyres Institute.**

