

A RESOLUTION OF THE DUKE GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDENT COUNCIL IN SUPPORT OF BANNING THE USE OF SINGLE USE PLASTIC ITEMS IN GPSC EVENTS

WHEREAS, the world consumed 335 million metric tons of plastic items in 2016 of which 50% were single use plastic (SUP) items¹

WHEREAS, the average number of disposables used are 500 million cups, half a million straws, 4 trillion plastic bags of which 32% lands in the world's oceans thereby polluting them

WHEREAS, it is estimated that by 2050 there would be more plastic than fish in the world's oceans

WHEREAS, the university offers a powerful space for sustainability practices particularly in banning SUPs and

WHEREAS, Duke dining, major coffee chains and fast food outlets have already taken a step in this regard by banning the usage of these items on all their facilities

WHEREAS, Duke Dining venues, including vendors, on Duke's campus will now use paper bags and utensils, straws and drinkware made from a Polylactic acid (PLA), a biodegradable plant-based substance with properties similar to traditional, oil-based plastics³

WHEREAS, 400 cities across the US have imposed a ban of the usage of some form of SUPs to promote sustainable practices⁴

WHEREAS GPSC events including GA meetings, social events, etc. generate a huge amount of plastic waste which would negate the efforts being put in by various government agencies in curbing the plastic menace. Banning these would help support the global community in reducing plastic waste

WHEREAS that steps need to be taken to promote the use of biodegradable and reusable products on campus as a long-term sustainability plan to ensure that we protect the earth and prevent the oceans from being polluted further.

¹ Fact Sheet: Single use plastic products-

<https://www.earthday.org/2018/03/29/fact-sheet-single-use-plastics/>

² See the complicated landscape of plastic ban in the US:-

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/2019/08/map-shows-the-complicated-landscape-of-plastic-bans/>

³ Plastic ban in various states-

<https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/8/20/20806651/plastic-bag-ban-straw-ban-tax>

⁴ Duke dining bans plastic-

<https://today.duke.edu/2018/07/duke-dining-bans-disposable-plastic>

Resolved that the General assembly

- Authorizes the transition from single use plastics to sustainable products. The utilization of single use plastic items must be eliminated by up to 90% by May 2020, with a gradual transition to replacing all single use items with reusable or recyclable items. However, the purchase of these items should be stopped immediately which will provide a 8 month window for exhaustion of current stock.
- Mandates that the student groups funded by GPSC adopt suitable measures to stop the use of single use plastics and adopt measures including, but not limited to: 1) demonstration of the use of sustainable products, whereas any reusable or recyclable alternative should be utilized unless otherwise justifiable, 2) inclusion of bylines in email invitations and fliers to events that include verbiage to the effect of, “please bring your own ***reusable*** flatware, cutlery, and cup if possible.” Failure to advance efforts in waste reduction will result in the loss of GPSC-supported event funding. Student groups must use reusable, recyclable, or compostable products during their events
- Mandates that single use plastic (non-recyclable) items including plastic bags, straws, plastic wrap, cups, plates, spoons, forks and other cutlery items will not be purchased. Single use plastic containers provided by vendors/caterers can be recycled when necessary (eg. plastic boxes used for serving sauces), but efforts should be made to decline other single use items provided by the vendor. Alternatives such as

paper-based products should replace plastic commodities in the short term, with the intent of eliminating single-use disposable products in favor of reusable products altogether in the next several years.

- Authorizes the exemption of groups with special needs and circumstances from this resolution, when compliance with this policy would otherwise ensure undue burden beyond what is assumed by other groups on the members of the group. Circumstances which can lead to a shortage in these products will also be considered