

“THE WAR AGAINST PLASTICS: WHO’S WINNING?”

A panel for journalists
The Society of Environmental Journalists
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Flint, MI
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The Comments of Faye Park
President of U.S. PIRG
and Executive Vice President of The Public Interest Network

1) Our economy and society are built around a fundamentally unsustainable one-way pipeline: Extract, Produce, Consume, Throw out, Repeat.... This results in ever growing piles and islands of trash and incinerators belching out toxic plumes.

2) We can't just recycle, landfill, or incinerate our way out of this-- the volume is too big, and the 'what do we do with this stuff' aspect is only one of many problems with our throwaway culture (extraction, unintended leaching of additives as we use the plastics, etc). We have to reduce how much we're producing and using in the first place.

3) As bleak as things might look at the federal level, there is important and promising action happening at the state and municipal level around the US to rein in this pipeline: e.g., plastic bag bans and polystyrene (aka Styrofoam) around the country (CA, NJ, CO); efforts to pass 'right to repair' laws in over 18 states (giving consumers the 'right' to fix their phones, farm equipment, etc. instead of having to buy new replacements when the battery or parts wear out).

USPIRG's Trash in America Report, February

2018: <https://uspirg.org/sites/pirg/files/reports/US%20-%20Trash%20in%20America%20-%20Final.pdf>

The Public Interest Network's plastic pollution Medium.com page: <https://medium.com/u-s-pirg/tagged/plastic-pollution>

The Public Interest Network's plastic Medium.com page: <https://medium.com/the-public-interest-network/search?q=plastic>

Faye Park
President, U.S. PIRG
Executive Vice President, The Public Interest Network

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Mark Morgenstein
Senior Communications Manager
The Public Interest Network
1543 Wazee Street #440
Denver, CO 80202

work: 303-573-5556

cell: 678-427-1671

markm@publicinterestnetwork.org

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