

Business	A28
Corrections	A15
Editorials/Opinion	A24
Flash!	A16
Health & Science	A23
Long Island	A14
Lottery	A51
Nation	A32
Obituaries	A34
Reaching Newsday	A15
TV listings	B18
Weather	A36
World	A33

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# TOP STORIES



HOWARD SCHNAPP

Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo, at LIU Post in Brookville on Monday, held a ceremonial signing of the plastic bag ban. ■ Video: [newsday.com/state](http://newsday.com/state)

# On LI, Cuomo touts ban on plastic bags

## Stresses impact on environment

BY DAVID M. SCHWARTZ  
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Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo marked Earth Day Monday with a ceremonial signing of a bill to ban plastic bags statewide beginning March 1.

Cuomo, at an event at LIU Post in Brookville, said the single-use shopping bags litter waterways and hang from trees and the ban sends a signal that New York cares about the environment.

He called bringing reusable bags a “minor inconvenience. You have to remember the reusable bags. But in the scope of life it’s such a trivial thing.”

The state law allows counties and cities to implement a 5-cent fee on paper shopping

bags, which have their own environmental impact. Environmentalists and many legislators had pushed for a statewide fee on paper bags.

Eric Goldstein, a senior attorney for the Natural Resources Defense Council, said, “The gold standard would be to have bigger paper and plastic bags addressed statewide. This is the next best thing.”

Thin plastic bags like those given out at grocery, convenience and retail stores will be banned statewide. Paper bags still will be available but it’ll be up to local governments whether stores will have to charge a 5-cent fee for them.

The plastic bag ban was contained in the state budget, which was adopted April 1.

Under the new state law, municipalities can pass legislation that would send three cents to a state environmental fund and two cents to county funds to

promote reusable bags.

Suffolk County has a 5-cent fee on plastic and paper bags that’s kept by stores.

Leaders of Nassau County Republican legislators, who hold the majority, have called a 5-cent fee on paper bags “dead on arrival.”

But Assemb. Steve Englebright (D-Setauket), who attended the signing ceremony, said the law “sends a clear message we want to clean up the environment and improve our way of life.”

Also Monday, Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone vowed to sign a local law banning plastic straws and polystyrene foam containers, but he can’t do that until after he holds a public hearing on the legislation Thursday.

Accompanied by bill sponsor Legis. Kara Hahn (D-Setauket) at an Earth Day news conference in Hauppauge, Bellone

said straws may seem insignificant, but “the sheer volume of plastics” poses “a significant danger” to wildlife and waters.

“Whenever you roll out environmental legislation there is initially some reluctance, but the public pretty quickly adjusts to the new reality and embraces it,” Bellone said.

The county measure would take effect on Jan. 1, although Hahn said more than 100 restaurants have pledged to comply immediately.

The legislation limits straws to restaurant patrons who request them and requires those straws to be biodegradable, not plastic. Exemptions allow those with disabilities or medical conditions to get plastic straws.

Bellone’s hearing will be held at the H. Lee Dennison building media room in Hauppauge at 9:30 a.m. Thursday, and he has until May 13 to sign the bill.

With Rick Brand