

Legislature OKs 5-year ban that bars local governments from forbidding plastic straws

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April 30, 2019 09:23 PM, Updated 2 hours 22 minutes ago

- The Florida Senate on Tuesday passed an environmental bill that includes prohibiting local governments from enforcing regulations on plastic straws over the next five years.

On a 24-15 vote, the Senate imposed a moratorium on plastic-straw bans, the latest example of the constant tug-of-war between the Legislature and cities and counties over local regulations.

The decision to pass the bill also followed numerous failed attempts by lawmakers over the years to prevent plastic-straw bans. Currently, 10 cities across the state have rules governing the use of plastic straws, which have drawn environmental concerns.

The House passed the bill ([HB 771](#)) last week, meaning it is now ready to head to Gov. Ron DeSantis. If he signs the bill, local governments would not be able to enforce any ordinance banning plastic straws until July 2024.

The vote Tuesday in the Republican-controlled Senate was largely along party lines. Democrats Lauren Book of Plantation, Randolph Bracy of Orlando and Bobby Powell of West Palm Beach crossed party lines to vote for the bill, while Republican George Gainer of Panama City opposed it.

Under the bill, the research arm of the Legislature would also be required to conduct a study of “each ordinance or regulation adopted” by local governments related to single-use plastic straws. A report of the study would need to be submitted by December to Senate President Bill Galvano, R-Bradenton, and House Speaker José Oliva, R-Miami Lakes.

Rather than focusing on the environmental impacts of local plastic-straw bans, the study would focus on the “data and conclusions” used in adopting local ordinances.

This has irked environmental groups, which argue that sufficient evidence already exists that plastic pollution is detrimental to the environment. When lawmakers considered the proposal in committee hearings, groups often brought up a study by the World Economic Forum that said there will be more plastic by weight than fish in oceans by 2050.

State lawmakers have also taken aim at other local regulations that were enacted to protect the environment. One of those efforts is in a bill by Sen. Travis Hutson, R-St. Augustine. That bill targets local ordinances that restrict the sale and use of sunscreens containing certain chemicals that studies have found to damage coral reefs.

The bill passed Tuesday by the Senate includes other issues along with the moratorium on plastic-straw bans. It also deals with issues related to recyclable materials.