



Advanced | Exemplar Essay

Bag Tax

Not the Right Answer



Claim and Focus

The writer engages the reader with context surrounding the topic ("Governments are trying," "California," "Our state") and narrows to a clear and specific claim that is developed fully throughout the essay.



Support and Evidence

Several pieces of highly relevant and cited evidence are presented ("American Progressive Bag Alliance," "DC's Plastic Bag Tax Exposed") as are full explanations of how each supports the claim ("While trying to mitigate... environmental fund," "putting taxes on plastic bags does not hinder consumer behavior"). Counterclaims are offered ("by charging for bags, we will help the environment"), weakened by cited evidence (*Inspiration Green*, *Animal Australia*) and sufficiently debunked ("There will always be people who choose to litter, no matter how it affects animals or how high the taxes on bags may be").



Organization

The essay is effectively structured to progress the argument forward. Related ideas are linked by varied transitions ("there are many reasons why," "Contrary to," "People in support of this tax," "That notion is misleading") that help show connections between claim, evidence, analysis, and counterclaim.



Language and Style

The writer maintains a fair and formal tone, while a unique voice emerges through the analysis. Sentence structure is varied, word choice is balanced with advanced vocabulary and connotations that appeal to the audience's values ("While trying to mitigate a negative environmental impact, we could be putting tens of thousands of hard-working people out of their jobs").



Using Exemplars in Your Lessons

Exemplar essays are tools to take abstract descriptions and make them more concrete for students. One way to use them is to print the clean copies of the essays and allow students to use the rubric to make notes or even find examples of important elements of an essay - thesis statements, introductions, evidence, conclusions, transitions, etc. Teachers can also use exemplars to illustrate what each score point within a trait 'looks like' in an authentic student essay. For additional ideas, please see "25 Ways to Use Exemplar Essays" by visiting the Curriculum Resources page in Help.

Bag Tax



Not the Right Answer

Dear Fellow Consumers,

Governments are trying to do what they can to prevent non-biodegradable waste from polluting our environment, and they believe one way is to add a tax on plastic bags. Governor Edmund Brown of California signed a law that prohibits stores from handing out plastic bags for free, requiring them to put a tax on them. Some people welcomed this new law as a great step towards saving the environment; however, others are shocked at the idea and believe that this is just another thing that can be taxed. Our state government is proposing a similar tax, saying that local stores should be required to charge a 25-cent fee for each plastic bag. I believe that, although plastic bags do harm the environment, enforcing a tax to stop consumers from using them is not the right answer.

Based on data from cities that have already enacted this tax, there are many reasons why a decision like this will *not* affect the economy and individuals in a positive way. When California proposed a similar ballot issue, the American Progressive Bag Alliance stated that banning plastic bags would threaten over 30,000 jobs nationwide. They said that if the law went into effect, "It would jeopardize thousands of manufacturing jobs... and fleece consumers for billions." While trying to mitigate a negative environmental impact, we could be putting tens of thousands of hard-working people out of their jobs. Further evidence revealed that such a fee was a "scam" to increase grocers' profits, as none of the money was actually directed to an environmental fund.

There is also little evidence to support the notion that enforcing a plastic bag fee would actually change the behavior of the consumers themselves. In an article titled, "DC's Plastic Bag Tax Exposed" concerning Washington D.C.'s bag tax, it states that "taxes should not be used as a method of impacting consumer behavior [because] it doesn't work. And these taxes disproportionately hurt the lower income sectors of society." Imposing a fee or tax could penalize people who can't afford to pay it. The poorer population might not have the money to purchase plastic bags or the more expensive reusable bags. This extra expense could also be seen as unfair because the richer population has little problem paying these extra costs. Contrary to the government's beliefs, putting taxes on plastic bags does not hinder consumer behavior.

People in support of this tax argue that by charging for bags, we will help the environment. That notion is misleading; keeping the environment clean and healthy is important to all of us. Those of us who oppose the tax simply believe that it is not the most effective method for helping the environment. According to *Inspiration Green*, a website used to help spread the word about pollution, an estimated number of 500 billion and 1 trillion plastic bags get used each year. *Animal Australia*, an organization that helps save wildlife, said that "more than 100,000 animals die every year after ingesting or becoming entangled in [plastic bags]." The preservation of species on Earth is a very important topic that needs to be attended to by the world as a whole, but taxing plastic bags isn't going to help. People are creatures of habit and many will continue to choose convenience over cost. There will always be people who choose to litter, no matter how it affects animals or how high the taxes on bags may be.

The government's attempt to help the environment is a good indication that they are working towards helping the environment, but the way they plan to execute it is terrible. Using a negative reinforcement by taxing and punishing those who use plastic bags is by far the worst possible solution. Instead, the government should look for a more positive way of helping the environment. What can be done instead is creating campaigns and help spread awareness about the



hazard of plastic bags to the environment, and how to dispose of them correctly. If people were rewarded for bringing in their own reusable bags, the plastic bag usage would most likely decrease. Punishing people by making them pay extra for their bags won't help as much as positively reinforcing them to do something better. Overall, I strongly believe that although plastic bags are a problem, putting taxes on them is not an effective solution. It is extremely important to keep Earth healthy, but putting a tax on plastic bags simply is not the right way to help solve it. There are many positive alternative solutions to this problem that would be better for our economy and our nation's citizens that don't require a tax.

Thank you for your time.