

NATIONAL STRATEGY TO END THE USE OF PAPER STRAWS

A Report Of The Domestic Policy Council

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The WHITE HOUSE



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Dear Fellow American,

When I won the presidential election on November 5th by historic margins, it was a resounding victory not just for secure borders and a strong economy, not just for tackling inflation and keeping men out of women's sports, not just for peace through strength and ending forever-wars, and not just for lower energy costs and "drill, baby, drill." It was a resounding victory for common sense. As such, my Administration is committed to restoring sound policies, including ridding us of the pulpy, soggy mess that torments too many of our citizens whenever they drink through a paper straw.

Paper straws are a laughable supposition. They are bad for the environment, they are unhygienic, they are expensive, they contain dangerous forever chemicals, and—as with most things advanced by the previous Administration—they do not work. This is not rocket science—water and other drinks dissolve paper, rendering these straws useless for their sole purpose. A product of a fictitious yet frequently cited statistic, they are inefficient and wasteful. It is ludicrous that anyone saw fit to enforce their use and that these useless implements have infiltrated our marketplaces as much as they have. Among the many things that my Administration is having to roll back, this is among the most absurd.

For years the Fake News media worked with the previous Administration to support the disastrous Green New Scam, singling out plastic straws for elimination. These policies are wasteful and ruinous. Fueled by the widespread fearmongering, their irrational campaign has resulted in sweeping mandates that bar the use of traditional straws. However, it is obvious to all but the previous Administration that pushing for the universal adoption of a dissolving straw comprised of forever chemicals is a terrible idea. There is no reason for the American people to continue suffering the indignity of this useless product. As such, I am ending the Green New Scam and bringing common sense back to our beverages.

In the pages of this report, the National Strategy to End the Use of Paper Straws, you will find a whole host of reasons as to why paper straws are unsatisfactory and a plan of action to combat their promotion and usage. Common sense requires us to do battle with the ridiculous, whatever form it takes. The end of paper straws is yet another victory in this campaign.

Sincerely,
Donald J. Trump

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When American citizens visit a coffee shop or restaurant, they deserve effective and safe utensils. Too often, they have not had that option because of absurd government mandates to use paper straws.

Consumers deserve better choices and better products. Paper is a poor substitute for plastic when conveying a liquid. Scientific research corroborates common sense. Paper straws are not only an annoyance but also a genuine risk to human health, public safety, and the environment. Across nearly every relevant criterion, replacing plastic straws with paper alternatives is not justified:

- **Functionality:** Paper straws lack the structural integrity of their plastic alternatives.
- **Safety:** They are hazardous to children and people with disabilities.
- **Health:** They contain PFAS chemicals linked to major health conditions.
- **Equal Protection:** They unduly burden Americans with disabilities.
- **Environmental Impact:** Plastic straws represent an insignificant share of pollution.
- **Cost:** Paper straws can cost up to 400% more than conventional plastic straws.

Despite the scientific evidence and their evident failures, states and municipalities throughout the country have adopted policies to discourage single-use plastics and promote the use of paper straws. The previous Administration mandated paper straws as a domestic policy priority.

President Trump will use all levers available to him to restore common sense and end the use of paper straws. The Administration will adopt a government-wide approach to target paper straws through clear government communications, efficient government procurement, and the promotion of health and safety. Key agencies have developed and begun implementing policies to ensure that American consumers are not forced to use paper straws.

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	iii
INTRODUCTION: THE STRAW THAT BROKE AMERICA’S BACK.....	1
SECTION I: THE PAPER-THIN CASE FOR THE PAPER STRAW.....	2
Functionality	2
Safety	3
Choking Hazards.....	3
Other Medical Risks	3
Health.....	4
Environmental Impact.....	9
Cost	11
Consumer Preferences	11
SECTION II: ONE STRAW TOO FAR.....	12
State and Local Government Mandates	12
Federal Government Mandates	13
SECTION III: RESTORING COMMON SENSE	15
Guiding Principles	15
Strategic Priorities.....	16
Ensuring Equal Protection	16
Promoting Health & Safety with Scientific Integrity	16
Clear Communications.....	16
Efficient Procurement	17
Government-Wide Implementation	18
The Department of Health and Human Services	18
U.S. Department of Agriculture.....	19
Environmental Protection Agency	21
Department of the Interior	21
Department of Commerce.....	22
Department of Energy	22
Federal Acquisition Regulatory Council	22
General Services Administration	23
Office of Management and Budget.....	23

United States Agency for International Development	23
CONCLUSION: THE LAST STRAW.....	24
REFERENCES.....	25

INTRODUCTION: THE STRAW THAT BROKE AMERICA'S BACK

When Americans visit a coffee shop or cafeteria, they should expect to find utensils that are functional and safe, not wasteful or hazardous. Yet for the past several years, they often have not. In too many instances, the American people have had only one terrible option: the paper straw.

The straw was an American invention. Civil War veteran Marvin C. Stone was tired of his rye grass straw ruining the flavor of his mint juleps. So, he decided to tinker in his Washington, D.C., residence. He wrapped paper around a pencil, glued it, and then figured out how to add paraffin wax to maintain structure and integrity. He filed a patent for the “artificial straw” (U.S. Patent No. 375,962). Stone’s Patent Paper Julep straws became a national sensation. The Stone Straw Factory became an industrial behemoth, pumping out eight million straws a day by the 1950s (Kelly, 2019).

As American technology, industry, and culture advanced, the paper straw was supplanted. Americans could not use paper straws for their fast-food soda cups, which featured cross-haired covers that tore at the paper. Consumers demanded the inexpensive, flexible, and durable plastic straw. Aside from apple pie, there’s hardly anything more American than the plastic straw (Gibbens, 2019).

But then, Washington, D.C., stepped in to force paper straws back into our citizens’ mouths. The Biden Administration adopted a government-wide approach to stigmatize the convenient plastic utensil. States and municipalities further infringed upon their citizens’ consumer preferences.

Paper straws still had their drawbacks. They’d tear. They’d disintegrate. They could even still interfere with the taste. Marvin C. Stone had addressed these issues with paraffin wax (Kelly, 2019). So-called “green” manufacturers address it with PFAS “forever chemicals.” A government-sponsored social experiment coerced Americans to ingest chemicals. Scientists had to play catch-up, and the alarm bells started to ring about the danger of these chemicals to human health.

These bells were simply ignored by the Biden Administration and by some state and local governments. The voices of individuals with disabilities—who had difficulty with modern straw alternatives and therefore could not always receive equal accommodation in public spaces—were marginalized.

President Trump will end this coercive social experiment, which has come at a substantial cost to consumers and a scientifically incalculable cost to human health. He will restore common sense and protect the health and safety of American citizens.

SECTION I: THE PAPER-THIN CASE FOR THE PAPER STRAW

Advocates for paper straws cite the oft-repeated claim that Americans use 500 million plastic straws per day. Media outlets uncritically repeat the statistic, and businesses and government entities rapidly started banning plastic straws in response. But it is completely made up. The number was invented by a nine-year-old student who performed cursory “research” on plastic straws by making a few phone calls and then doing some back-of-the-napkin math (Lei & Coleman, 2018).

Much like the 500 million statistic, the policy rationale underlying plastic straw bans is completely unscientific. The data in this report demonstrates that plastic straws are not the correct target for efforts to clean up the ocean.

The experience that Stuart, Florida, had with paper straws is particularly illustrative. In 2019, Stuart passed a ban on plastic straws. For years, residents, tourists, and small businesses complained about the paper straw mandate. After experiencing the failures of this policy firsthand, Stuart decided to return to common sense in February of this year and repeal its plastic straw ban. Immediately, local small businesses and residents were overjoyed. A local restaurant owner told a reporter that his “customers will be really happy” about the change because paper straws are ineffective and customers were tired of having to get two or three straws just to finish one drink (Garcia & Sutton, 2025).

Communities across the country should follow Stuart’s lead. After experiencing the trial run of paper straws, Americans have overwhelmingly decided that they are ineffective. States, local governments, and businesses across the country are listening to American consumers and realizing that it is high time to end bans on plastic straws.

Functionality

The sole function of a straw is to serve as a conduit for beverages, so its material should be water-resistant and capable of retaining shape when exposed to liquid. Paper fails in this regard for basic reasons. Paper is primarily made from cellulose, a complex carbohydrate found in plant cell walls. These cellulose fibers are held together by strong hydrogen bonds. Water molecules also have hydrogen bonds, and they can form hydrogen bonds with the hydroxyl (OH) groups on the cellulose fibers. When paper gets wet, water molecules disrupt the hydrogen bonds between the cellulose fibers. The water molecules effectively “interfere” with the bonds, weakening the structure of the paper. With the hydrogen bonds weakened, the cellulose fibers can separate more easily, leading to the paper becoming weak and prone to tearing.

American consumers experience this reaction of paper to water nearly any time they use a paper straw. If left in a beverage for more than a few minutes, a paper straw begins to disintegrate,

losing its shape and usability. The effect is measurable. Researchers at North Carolina State University studied paper straws that are commonly found on the market and demonstrated that after less than 30 minutes of exposure to liquid, paper straws experienced a 70% to 90% reduction in compressive strength (Gutierrez et al., 2019). Paper straws fail to adequately perform their sole function.

Safety

Many people with disabilities depend on plastic straws in order to participate fully in society and enjoy a beverage with their families at a restaurant. So do young children. The functional failures of paper straws are felt most acutely by these vulnerable Americans and can even pose dangers to them.

Choking Hazards

As paper straws disintegrate, they pose a choking hazard—particularly for young children. Other developed countries are waking up to the reality of this unacceptable risk, and the Netherlands and Finland have both issued official warnings about the dangers of paper straws.

After asking consumers for comment, the Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (NVWA) found 400 people who reported that their child or someone with special needs choked on part of a paper straw that disintegrated during use. In 15% of these cases, the person choking on the paper straw required intervention to dislodge the paper straw and restore normal breathing. The NVWA determined that the risk posed by paper straws is severe enough to warrant a formal caution, and it advised parents and caregivers to be careful when young children and people with disabilities use a paper straw. In its analysis, the NVWA noted that paper straws are dangerous choking hazards because they “become weak and disintegrate” during the course of normal use (McLaren-Kennedy, 2022).

The Finnish Food Authority also has received reports of infants and young children choking on paper straws. As in the cases investigated by the NVWA, in these instances paper straws broke down during regular use and posed a choking hazard to young children. In addition to the risk posed by choking, the Authority also noted that the harmful chemicals inside paper straws pose additional health hazards (Finnish Food Authority, 2022).

Other Medical Risks

Alternative straws are an inferior substitute for people with disabilities for a myriad of medical reasons. Metal straws can pose severe sensory and safety risks for people with disabilities that limit jaw control. Glass straws pose safety risks for people who suffer from tremors and other conditions that limit dexterity. Paper straws are not durable enough, and they break down too fast for people who require extra time to consume their beverages. Reusable straws need to be washed frequently, and not all people with disabilities are able to complete this chore easily.

Additionally, alternative straws do not offer the necessary flexibility or functionality for people with physical limitations (Danovich & Godoy, 2018).

Advocates for people with disabilities have voiced serious concerns about campaigns to replace plastic straws (Martinez, 2018). But their concerns and requirements have not been adequately heeded or respected. Some jurisdictions that prohibit plastic straws contain provisions allowing restaurants to make an exception for people with disabilities (Kessler, 2019). But in practice, many restaurants are unaware of these exceptions. The unfortunate result is that Americans with disabilities are excluded from society and have to face an unfair burden to accomplish basic tasks like visiting a restaurant with their family and friends (Danovich & Godoy, 2018).

For example, Seattle’s plastic straw ban allows restaurants to give out plastic straws to people with disabilities. While this exemption to the law exists, it is rarely used. Advocates for people with disabilities in Seattle asked over a dozen restaurants if they had plastic straws available for people who need them, and each restaurant said that they did not (Danovich & Godoy, 2018).

This result is not surprising. Seattle’s municipal code does not codify an exemption to the plastic straw ban for people with disabilities. Rather, it only empowers government bureaucrats to make one-year exemptions to the plastic straw ban. It is no surprise that many restaurants do not have the time or resources to seek annual permission from the plastic straw bureaucrats at Seattle City Hall (Hellmann, 2018). Seattle’s plastic straw regulation puts small businesses and people with disabilities in a difficult position.

Restaurants and other businesses should not be placed in the position of having to assess whether a particular individual has a disability. Nor should people with disabilities need to request such a basic accommodation as having a functional straw when visiting a public establishment. Unlike the paper straw, government regulations promoting their use are rigid and inflexible.

Health

Paper straws contain harmful PFAS (Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances), which are often referred to as “forever chemicals” because of their extremely long lifespans. The EPA has determined that many PFAS are harmful to human health, and they have been linked to harms affecting reproductive health, developmental delays in children, cancer, hormone imbalance, obesity, and other dangerous health conditions (Environmental Protection Agency [EPA], 2021).

PFAS are added to paper straws because these potent chemicals are strongly resistant to grease, oil, water, and heat. In addition to paper straws, PFAS are also added as waterproofing agents to products clearly not fit for human digestion, such as carpet (Beesoon et al., 2012), stain-resistant fabric and upholstery (Schreder & Goldberg, 2022), carpet cleaners (Geller, 2023), nail polish (Kluger, 2023), shoes, firefighting foam (Ginty & Lindwall, 2024), and artificial turf (Toxic Use Reduction Institute, 2020).

The CDC estimates that some types of PFAS chemicals persist in humans for decades before breaking down.

Type of PFAS	Half-Lives in Humans
PFOA	2.1–10.1 years
PFOS	3.3–27 years
PFHxS	4.7–35 years
PFNA	2.5–4.3 years
PFBS	665 hours
PFBA	72–81 hours

(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2020).

As a result of the chemicals’ long lifespans, they gradually build up in humans and animals over time. Researchers have detected serious health implications as a result. The EPA conducted an analysis of current peer-reviewed scientific studies and found that PFAS exposure is linked to concerning health risks including:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decreased fertility • High blood pressure in pregnant women • Developmental delays in children • Low birth weight • Accelerated puberty • Bone variations in children • Behavioral changes in children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased risk of cancer, including prostate, kidney, and testicular cancers • Diminished immune system • Hormonal interference • Increased cholesterol • Increased risk of obesity
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(EPA, 2021).

Additional studies have also linked PFAS exposure to other negative population-wide trends, such as sleep issues in young adults (Li et al., 2024).

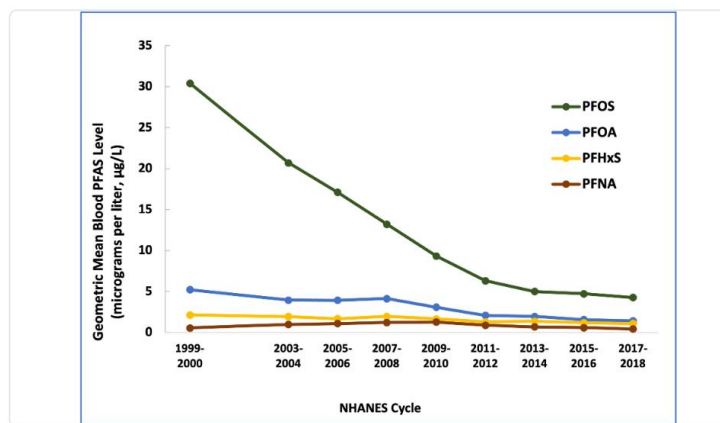
Scientists and regulators have had substantial concerns about PFAS chemicals for decades. In 2001, the United States signed, but did not ratify, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, joined by 151 other countries. The Stockholm Convention added the first PFAS to its list of regulated chemicals in 2009, restricting the use of PFOS (“Perfluorooctane sulfonic acid.”) (Secretariat of the Stockholm Convention, 2009). In 2019, the Convention added another kind of PFAS, called PFOA (“Perfluorooctanoic acid”) to its list (Earth Negotiations Bulletin, 2019). In 2022, it banned use of another PFAS called PFHxS (“Perfluorohexane sulfonic acid”) (Earth Negotiations Bulletin, 2022).

In 2020, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced a “Voluntary Phase-Out by Industry of Certain PFAS Used in Food Packaging” of certain types of PFAS (Food and Drug Administration [FDA], 2020). In 2024, the FDA announced results, noting that some “grease-

proofing substances containing Per and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) are no longer being sold by manufacturers for food contact use in the U.S. market” (FDA, 2024).

As a result of increased awareness and voluntary reductions by American industry, the most common kinds of PFAS have become less common, leading to declining blood levels of the most common types of PFAS in humans, according to measurements taken by the CDC’s National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, as the following chart from them shows (CDC, 2024).

Blood levels of the most common PFAS

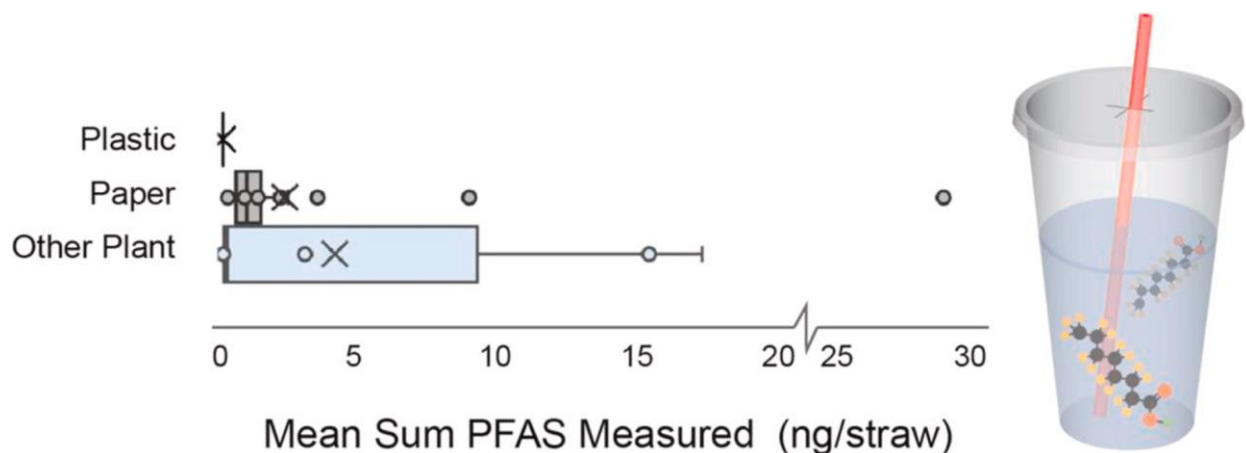


PFAS blood levels are declining with reduced production and use.

(CDC, 2024).

But such trends may be misleading. The FDA and industry voluntary actions dealt with only a small portion of consumer products containing PFAS. No action has been taken to remove PFAS from paper straws. Moreover, as manufacturers have worked to phase out the PFAS chemicals that have attracted regulator attention, they have sometimes simply migrated to using less-studied PFAS chemicals. As a 2021 study by University of Florida researchers put it: “The fate, transport, and potential toxic effects of these novel replacement PFAS have yet to be fully assessed” (Timshina et al., 2021). The trends regarding thousands of other less-studied PFAS chemicals are unknown. The health consequences may be rising.

Studies have consistently found that paper and other plant-based straws contain significant amounts of PFAS chemicals, unlike plastic straws. The same 2021 study by researchers affiliated with the University of Florida found that “While the plastic straws had no measurable PFAS, 21 PFAS were detected in the paper and other plant-based straws” (Timshina et al., 2021). This graphic from their paper shows their results:



(Timshina et al., 2021).

The paper discusses why “biodegradable” products often use PFAS: “Unfortunately, many of the products marketed as biodegradable, especially those made from paper, have been shown to contain PFAS to make them resistant to rapid deterioration from contact with grease or other fluids” (Timshina et al., 2021).

The researchers created a graph showing the amount of PFAS in each brand of straw they tested. Every plastic straw had zero detectable PFAS. Every paper straw had some, with most having about 1 nanogram of two types of PFAS, and one brand having near 30 nanograms consisting of 13 types of PFAS chemicals.

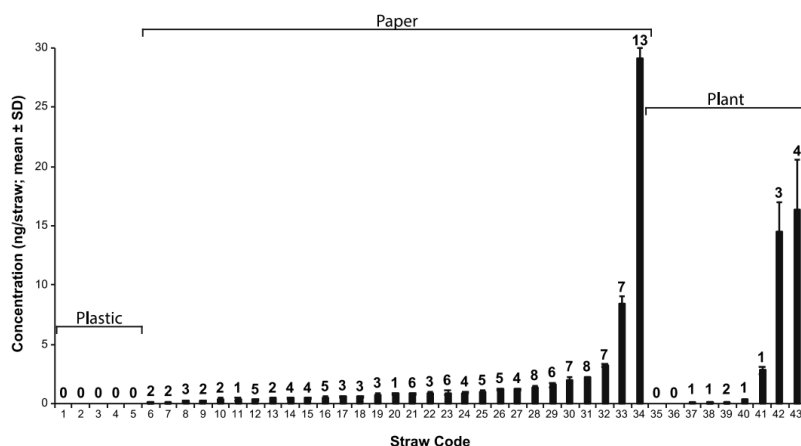


Fig. 1. Total PFAS concentrations (as mean sums \pm standard deviation) in ng per individual straws. The numbers above each bar represents the total number of individual PFAS species that were measured in each straw brand.

(Timshina et al., 2021).

Researchers also found that different water temperatures, ranging from 39° Fahrenheit to 194° Fahrenheit, did not make a difference in the amount of PFAS that leached into drinking water. Their paper concludes: “The presence of PFAS in plant-based drinking straws demonstrates that

they are not fully biodegradable, contributing to the direct human ingestion of PFAS and to the cycle of PFAS between waste streams and the environment” (Timshina et al., 2021).

The finding replicates, and European researchers have also found dramatically higher concentrations of PFAS in paper straws compared to plastic (Boisacq et al., 2023).

Belgian researchers tested 39 straws from Europe and Asia and found:

PFAS were found to be present in almost all types of straws, but primarily in those made from plant-based materials. These “eco-friendly” plant-based straws are not necessarily a more sustainable alternative to plastic straws, because they can be considered as an additional source of PFAS exposure (Boisacq et al., 2023).

How serious is the health risk posed by the amounts of PFAS detected in paper straws? Researchers note that the daily dose considered safe for humans by the EPA is 1000x times higher than the amount leached from the average paper straw. European guidelines, however, set the safe level at only about 30x higher (Timshina et al., 2021). If a person used the worst paper straw found in the study, a single use of the straw would put them close to the daily safe intake of PFAS deemed safe by the most cautious health authorities. As the study puts it:

PFOA leached from a single straw in this study (average 1.53 ± 0.122 ng/straw) would contribute only 0.1% of the EPA reference dose (20 ng/kg/day) for direct human ingestion of PFOA...

However, nine US states have developed more stringent drinking water guidelines (Post, 2021) and other agencies have proposed stricter daily intake limits for PFOA (Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, 3 ng/kg/day (Breysse, 2018)) or total PFAS (European Food Safety Authority, 0.63 ng/kg/day (European Food Safety Auth., 2020)) (Timshina et al., 2021).

A total shift to using paper straws would entail a small but appreciable increase in Americans’ intake of PFAS chemicals. Americans, therefore, are placed at an unnecessarily higher health risk every time they drink from paper straws.

From food packaging (FDA, 2025) and clothing (Toxic-Free Future, 2022) to lipstick (FDA, 2024) and even rainwater (McGrath, 2022), PFAS are difficult—if not quite impossible—for Americans to avoid entirely. In a near worst-case scenario, where an individual uses the worst brand of paper straw twice a day, merely the use of paper straws could push that individual over what European regulatory agencies consider to be safe. In practice, individuals are already consuming plenty of PFAS via other means, so adding a paper straw to one’s routine could easily put a person over the limit considered safe by European regulators.

While the amount of PFAS in paper straws does not necessarily constitute a public health emergency, it adds to already-serious human consumption levels of PFAS. At the very least,

scientific findings strongly suggest that paper straws should not be promoted by the federal government.

Environmental Impact

Plastic litter in the oceans is an eyesore, contributes to microplastic pollution, and can cause trouble for wildlife. As the EPA put it in 2019:

“In one year, an average of eight million tons of marine plastic litter ended up in oceans across the world due to poor management of solid waste, insufficient infrastructure, littering, and dumping. This mismanaged waste degrades our ecosystems, affects the health of marine life, and threatens sectors within the economy ...” (EPA, 2019).

Following a viral video of a sea turtle that suffered because a plastic straw got stuck in its nose, many state and local governments rushed to ban them (Rosenbaum, 2018). But targeting plastic straws does almost nothing to clean up marine debris, even as it imposes a harm on the American people.

Plastic straws make up a mere .025% of all plastic in oceans (Gibbens, 2019). Put another way, they comprise just 1/40th of 1% of plastic in oceans. Put yet another way, for every plastic straw that is littered, 4,000 times as much plastic is littered in the form of other plastic items.

Those statistics show that the overall threat posed by plastic straws is tiny and suggest that the product has been unfairly demonized and focused on.

Americans, by and large, are good stewards of the environment and put trash in the garbage rather than in the oceans. As a result, the United States is responsible for a tiny 0.25% of all global plastic ocean waste, (Meijer et al., 2021) even as the United States produces more than one quarter of the world’s economic output (Ip, 2024).

■ Rest of World ■ United States 500 ○ 1000

Marine Plastic Waste Size Comparison



(Meijer et al., 2021).

Combining this fact with the statistics about plastic straws as a proportion of all plastic litter, it becomes clear that if plastic straws were banned entirely throughout America, the amount of global ocean plastic would fall only about .0000625%—an infinitesimal change. American plastic straws make up just 1/16,000th of 1% of global plastic pollution. In other words, for every plastic straw saved, 1,600,000 times as much plastic would still be littered in the form of other plastic items.

Banning plastic straws or promoting paper alternatives will not save the environment. These statistics show that the campaign to ban straws was based more on feelings than on facts. Even many activists now accept that, with the World Resources Institute calling plastic straw bans merely “putting a finger on a spigot” and saying it “won’t solve our plastic problem” (World Resources Institute, 2018).

There is no consensus about whether paper or plastic straws lead to more air pollution or other emissions. As one study summarizes:

Zanghelini et al (2020) ... concluded that plastic drinking straws have better environmental performance in climate change emission compared with paper disposable straws. In contrast, Chitaka et al (2020) reported higher climate change emissions of plastic straws than paper ones due to the use of coal for polypropylene production in South Africa (Gao, A. L., & Wan, Y., 2022).

Considering the mixed evidence, which depends on the location of production, the scientific literature provides no basis for the conclusion that banning plastic straws will reduce environmental emissions.

If there is *any* environmental benefit from banning plastic straws, it is scientifically indiscernible for air pollution, and it rounds to zero when compared to ocean plastic pollution in general. Banning plastic straws has greatly inconvenienced consumers, for approximately zero environmental impact.

Cost

Paper straws cost dramatically more than plastic straws. A plastic straw can cost about a half-cent while a paper straw costs about two-and-a-half cents—or in other words, 400% more (Ell, 2018). The two additional cents don't make economic common sense. In the private sector, the increased costs of purchasing paper straws are passed on to the consumer. After four disastrous years for the economy, the last thing American families need is to be paying more every time they go out to eat.

In addition to harming consumers, paper straws are also wasting taxpayer dollars. A 6,000-unit case of paper straws approved by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for government contracting costs \$113.31 (U.S. Department of Agriculture [USDA], n.d.) while a case of 6,000 plastic straws costs only \$59.99 on Amazon (Amazon, n.d.). Under Joe Biden's paper straw federal procurement mandate, taxpayers could have been paying upwards of 88% more each time the government placed an order for straws. Americans elected President Trump to restore common sense to our government, and he is cutting government waste on ineffective plastic straws.

Consumer Preferences

Most Americans (59%) would prefer to always receive a plastic drinking straw when they order a beverage at a fast-food restaurant, according to an IPSOS survey of some 2,000 Americans (IPSOS, 2018). That preference is bipartisan; majorities of Republicans, Democrats, and independents all said they prefer to always receive a plastic drinking straw at fast food restaurants (IPSOS, 2018).

Paper straws are far more likely to aggravate consumers. Only 4% of Americans found using plastic straws “unpleasant”, whereas 7 times as many reported that using paper straws was “unpleasant” (IPSOS, 2018).

Preferences for plastic straws are greater among people with kids; 64% of parents said they preferred to always receive a plastic drinking straw when they order a beverage at a fast-food restaurant and 36% rated paper straws “unpleasant” (IPSOS, 2018). Young children may be

particularly likely to use paper straws in ways which lead them to fall apart faster, and as a result, paper straws make it difficult for children to finish their drinks.

The general results replicate. In 2023, a YouGov poll found that 33% of Americans “disliked” or “hated” paper straws while only 21% “disliked” or “hated” plastic straws. Only 26% said plastic straws should be banned (YouGov, 2023).

Americans, by and large, are clearly not big fans of paper straws. That is no surprise considering how paper straws rapidly degrade and leach PFAS chemicals into beverages. American consumer preferences reinforce the case against bans and restrictions on plastic straws.

SECTION II: ONE STRAW TOO FAR

Despite their self-evident dysfunction and the scientific evidence of their risks, paper straws have proliferated across the country. This was no coincidence, but the results of deliberated efforts by public officials to disfavor single-use plastics and mandate use of paper straws.

State and Local Government Mandates

In the absence of federal bans, several states led the charge with their own regulations targeting plastic straws. In 2018, California became the first state to pass a law restricting plastic straw use so that full-service restaurants can only provide plastic straws upon request, not by default (Ellis & Moon, 2018). In the years since, a number of other states have implemented bans or strong restrictions on plastic straws. Seven additional states have since banned giving out plastic straws unless a customer specifically requests them: Maine, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington. Delaware has passed a similar law, and enforcement will begin in July (Williams, 2025). Though they vary in strictness, the state laws have collectively accelerated the shift to paper straws along the East and West Coast regions.

Even before state-wide actions, city and county governments were instrumental in forcing a switch to paper straws. Dozens of municipalities—especially coastal and environmentally conscious cities—enacted plastic straw bans or restrictions, including:

- Seattle, WA, became the first major U.S. city to ban plastic straws in 2018. As of July 2018, restaurants and food service providers in Seattle cannot offer single-use plastic straws or utensils. They must use compostable or paper straws instead. Seattle’s pioneering ordinance set the stage for other cities to follow (Archie & Smith, 2018).
- Washington, D.C., banned plastic straws in restaurants in 2019, making it the second major city (after Seattle) with such a law. Businesses had a phase-out period to switch to paper or other alternatives before fines began in mid-2019. D.C.’s Department of Energy & Environment began enforcing the straw ban as part of a broader sustainable utensil initiative (Schmidt, 2019).

- San Francisco, CA, approved a comprehensive Plastic Reduction Ordinance in 2018 that bans the distribution of plastic straws, stirrers, cocktail picks, and similar items, including those labeled “compostable” plastic. The ordinance requires eateries to use paper, bamboo, or other non-plastic straws. Violators can face fines of \$100–\$500. The city also banned certain take-out containers and restricted plastic utensils under this law (Britschgi, 2018).
- Miami Beach, FL, banned single-use plastic straws and stirrers in 2019—particularly focusing on eliminating them from beaches, parks, and sidewalk cafés. Miami Beach had initially banned straws on beaches and city properties, and later extended the rule to all businesses (with paper or plant-based straws as alternatives). Nearby communities in South Florida, like Fort Lauderdale and St. Petersburg, implemented similar bans (Gross, 2019).
- Malibu, CA, prohibited restaurants from providing or selling plastic straws, stir sticks, and cutlery in 2018. Businesses switched to paper straws or other eco-friendly versions. Malibu was an early adopter and part of a wave of smaller California coastal cities to enact such bans (Kesbeh, 2018).
- New York City, NY, implemented a law in 2021 forbidding food service establishments from providing plastic straws except on customer request (and completely banning plastic stirrers). Establishments must stock some plastic straws for disabled patrons who request them, but otherwise the default must be paper or another non-plastic straw. This essentially ended automatic plastic straw usage in NYC and led many restaurants to adopt paper straws to comply (Cather, 2025).
- Los Angeles, CA, stopped short of a full ban, but as of April 2019 implemented a “straws upon request” ordinance. Restaurants in LA cannot give a plastic straw unless a customer asks. While not an outright ban, this rule significantly curtailed plastic straw distribution. Many LA businesses introduced paper straws or eliminated straws to avoid any issues. (Fry & Reyes, 2019).

These local laws directly boosted adoption of paper straws in those markets. Businesses had to source paper or other compliant straws to avoid fines. In some cases, local governments also ran “straw on request” programs or distributed paper straws at city events to model the change.

A patchwork of state and local policies across the U.S. has thus created the regulatory push for paper straws—by either banning plastic versions outright or heavily restricting their use—well before any national mandate. This regulatory trend pressured many businesses to adopt paper straws in order to stay compliant with the law.

Federal Government Mandates

While our economy faltered, Joe Biden made enacting a federal paper straw mandate one of his top domestic policy priorities.

In December 2021, Biden issued Executive Order 10457, which made it a federal priority to “incentivize markets for sustainable products” (Executive Order 10457, 2021). The order began a government-wide approach to promoting products like paper straws. It directed the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to identify sustainable products and services. It directed the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) to review federal food procurement policies with the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting sustainability. Additionally, it ordered the General Services Administration (GSA) to track disclosure of greenhouse gas emissions and other sustainability-related actions by federal suppliers. It also established the “Buy Clean Task Force” to “provide recommendations to the Chair of CEQ and the Director of OMB, through the Administrator of the Office of Federal Procurement Policy” (Executive Order 10457, 2021).

Biden’s expansive order further mandated the implementation of training programs for federal employees to ensure their compliance. Biden tasked the Office of Personnel Management to work with the Department of Energy (DOE), the EPA, the GSA, and federal employee unions in developing these training programs.

The executive order also established a Federal Chief Sustainability Officer, and ordered this bureaucrat to engage with agency heads and stakeholders in implementing Biden’s order. Additionally, the order directed each agency to designate an Agency Chief Sustainability Officer. To ensure that woke procurement policies were being pursued across all federal agencies, Biden’s executive order also created a Chief Sustainability Officer Council to advise the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and CEQ on sustainability. Furthermore, the executive order also directed the heads of every government agency to develop and implement annual “Sustainability Plans” and “Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plans.”

In July 2024, the Biden Administration released a report detailing its government-wide approach to foist paper straws on the American people (“Mobilizing Federal Action,” 2024). The entire report demonstrates the Biden Administration’s misplaced priorities. For instance, instead of working to fix a record-breaking border crisis, Biden directed Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to collect data about how much plastic the United States imports and exports. Instead of working to address the crime crisis, Biden directed the Department of Justice (DOJ) to focus on ways to procure less plastic. Instead of working to protect Americans, Biden directed the Department of Defense (DOD) to develop expansive programs to reduce plastic waste.

In addition to wasting resources at CBP, DOJ, and DOD, the Biden Administration also leveraged the Consumer Products Safety Commission, the Department of Commerce (DOC), the DOE, the Department of the Interior (DOI), the Department of Labor, the Department of Transportation, the Department of Education, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the Department of State, the National Science Foundation, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the USDA to work on reducing plastic waste and promoting paper straws. In all respects, Biden launched a government-wide campaign against plastic straws.

Biden's attack on plastic straws led to egregious wastes of taxpayer dollars. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) issued wasteful grants to attack plastic straws. NOAA gave the Parley Foundation \$345,000 to help nightclubs in Quintana Roo, Mexico, reduce their use of plastic straws ("Raising Awareness," n.d.). Additionally, NOAA paid the Vermilion Sea Institute \$154,301 to help Mexican businesses transition to biodegradable takeout containers. In addition to these programs sending taxpayer dollars to Mexico, NOAA issued the following concerning grants ("The NOAA Marine Debris Program," n.d.):

- \$200,000 for the Clean Water Fund to design a training program for businesses, colleges, and state government agencies to reduce single-use plastics.
- \$134,178 for One Cool Earth to have California K-12 students sort lunchtime waste and conduct "waste audits."
- \$361,395 for restaurants, cafeterias, and convenience stores in Miami to reduce single-use plastics.

SECTION III: RESTORING COMMON SENSE

The Biden Administration enacted a government-wide effort to promote paper straws. The Trump Administration is launching a government-wide approach to undo Biden's policies and end the use of paper straws.

President Trump's Executive Order 14208 established that it is "the policy of the United States to end the use of paper straws." The order directs the heads of all departments and agencies to eliminate the procurement of paper straws, overturn all Biden Administration policies disfavoring plastic straws, implement contract policies to pressure states and entities that ban plastic straws, and explore all available tools to ensure this policy is enacted nationwide. The Trump Administration is already delivering results for the American people and executing this policy. The below information is a snapshot of what has already been done and what the Trump Administration is working on to ensure that this policy is fully enacted.

Guiding Principles

The left's attacks on plastic straws represent a small battle in a much larger campaign. The left wants the American people to endure hardship to advance radical climate policies. In contrast, common sense dictates that America should pursue human flourishing and a healthy environment.

The Trump Administration's return to common sense and restoration of plastic straws will follow these guiding principles:

1. Federal agencies should be creative and use every available policy lever to end the use of paper straws nationwide.
2. Making America Healthy Again is a top priority for the Trump Administration, and federal agencies should take all available actions to protect the American people from the health and safety risks of paper straws.
3. Taxpayer dollars should never be wasted, so no federal contracts or grants should fund paper straws or support any entities that ban plastic straws.
4. The federal government's policies should be driven by gold-standard science and not by woke messaging.

The Trump Administration is committed to fully implementing this executive order and ending the use of paper straws. The below section lists what actions the Trump Administration has already taken and what actions it can take to fully advance this policy.

Strategic Priorities

Ensuring Equal Protection

The Biden Administration marginalized the voices of citizens with disabilities, even after disability rights activists organized to amplify their concerns. All Americans, regardless of their disability status, deserve an equal right to drink from a straw at a restaurant.

The Trump Administration will take care to enforce federal law to equally protect the rights of all citizens in places of public accommodation.

Promoting Health & Safety with Scientific Integrity

The Biden Administration was aware of the threats that paper straws posed due to their choking risk and due to the presence of PFAS inside paper straws, yet it decided to promote them anyway. The American people overwhelmingly rejected this approach to governance when they gave President Trump a mandate to Make America Healthy Again.

Guided by the best-available science, the Trump Administration will use gold-standard research to analyze the health and safety impacts of paper straws. Instead of being driven by ideology, the Trump Administration will be driven to prioritize the health and well-being of the American people. To that end, regulatory agencies will work to ensure that the American people are protected from the harmful effects of paper straws.

Clear Communications

Under the Biden Administration, government agencies from NASA to the U.S. Forest Service promoted messaging disparaging plastic straws and promoting paper straws. These messaging campaigns wasted taxpayer dollars and needlessly divided Americans by disparaging reasonable preferences for plastic straws.

The below examples are characteristic of the anti-plastic messaging that infected government communications:

EPA United States Environmental Protection Agency

Ten Ways to Unpackage Your Life

Bring Your Own Bag

Say no to single use paper and plastic bags and bring your own high quality reusable bag. Whether you're picking up groceries, getting takeout food or clothes shopping, use your own bag. Each reusable bag can eliminate hundreds (if not thousands) of single-use plastic or paper bags!

Carry a Reusable Water Bottle

Carrying your own bottle cuts waste and can save you money.

Pack a Waste-Free Lunch

Do away with throw-away lunch packaging. Each child who brings a brown bag lunch to school every day generates 67 pounds of waste each year.

Bring Your Own Cup

The average American once used 500 paper cups a year. Replacing your single-use paper, plastic or Styrofoam cups with a reusable cup or mug can have a huge impact. Try keeping a cup in your bag, at the office, or in your car so you always have one around. Most coffee shops offer a discount for bringing your own cup!

Slow Down and Dine In

A big reason we have a food packaging problem to begin with is because people want to eat on the go - whether it's a drive-through or grab-n-go. Take a breath, slow down and dine in. Get your coffee "for here" or enjoy a home-cooked meal with friends and family and say goodbye to single-use packaging.

Consider Reusable Straws

Plastic straws are consistently one of the most littered plastic items, which means they end up in our waterways and are harmful to fish and wildlife. If you need a straw, consider using a reusable straw.

NASA

Sustainability Moment

An ethically produced and durable product helps the environment both not only now, but also in the long term. Longer lasting products make our environment healthier by reducing and pollution, and less is sent to the landfill. If the product is eco-friendly, for example by using environmentally friendly materials such as bamboo, or renewable energy sources such as solar, its immediate ecological footprint is reduced.

Consider an eco-friendly alternative when purchasing an everyday item:

- A solar powered keyboard to replace continuous battery usage
- A composter to reduce food waste and plastic garbage bag usage
- Bamboo toothbrushes with biodegradable nylon bristles
- Metal straws/silicone straws to replace single-use plastic straws
- Reusable beeswax food storage wrap as a replacement for plastic wrapping
- Wool dryer balls to replace fabric softener sheets and the harsh chemicals within

You can read information about buying sustainable products here: <https://www.epa.gov/greenerproducts/why-buy-greener-products>

Marine Debris Program
U.S. Department of Commerce
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Home | About Marine Debris | Discover Marine Debris | Our Work | If You Report | Resources | Multimedia | Blog

TRASH TALK

Regional Emmy® Award-Winning TRASH TALK

Don't you think it's time we all have an honest trash talk? *Ocean Today*, in partnership with the NOAA Marine Debris Program, presents Regional Emmy Award-winning TRASH TALK, a 15-minute special feature on marine debris for World Ocean Day. It is specially designed to be part of your World Ocean Day festivities and beyond. To download the video, visit [Ocean Today's website](#).

USDA **U.S. Forest Service**
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

What if plastic packaging was made from wood?

Amy Androff
Forest Product Laboratory
October 18, 2022

Two major societal issues — wildfire and petroleum-based plastics — are currently affecting life on our planet and significantly adding to greenhouse gas emissions. The USDA Forest Service's [Forest Products Laboratory \(FPL\)](#) is invested in one solution for both by developing recyclable, next-generation packaging materials from [wood](#).

National Park Service

ARTICLE

Update on Be Straw Free: What to Know

Plastic straws are a major contributor to plastic pollution. An estimated 500 million plastic straws are used daily in the United States alone, leading to billions being discarded every year. Since plastic straws are lightweight and often not recycled, they frequently end up in landfills and oceans. Milo Cress founded the [Be Straw Free](#) campaign at the age of nine and the

Under the Trump Administration, these messaging campaigns are over. All federal agencies should conduct a full audit of public-facing communications, including physical and digital media, and remove any that disparage plastic straws or promote paper straws.

Efficient Procurement

The federal government is the largest purchaser on earth. The Biden Administration weaponized the federal government's market power to promote harmful products like paper straws. The Biden Administration used a government-wide approach and involved the GSA, the EPA, the

USDA, the OMB, and a whole host of other government entities to ensure that tax dollars were being used to promote paper straws.

Paper straws are more expensive than plastic straws. Despite this fact, the Biden Administration decided to waste taxpayer dollars to promote its ideology.

In contrast to the Biden Administration's willfully blind commitment to paper straws, the Trump Administration is zealously protecting taxpayers from waste, fraud, and abuse in government spending. Instead of purchasing and promoting products due to ideological reasons, the Trump Administration will purchase and promote products based on quality and price. Government agencies should always be focused on getting the best deal for the American people and stewarding taxpayer dollars wisely.

Government-Wide Implementation

The Trump Administration is taking action to restore common sense and safeguard the health of American citizens. The Trump Administration is reforming government contracting across all government agencies to ensure that no federal agencies are wasting taxpayer dollars by acquiring paper straws. The below list details what actions government agencies have taken or can take to implement President Trump's executive order.

The Department of Justice

Under the Biden Administration, the DOJ enacted a Climate Adaptation Plan that mandated that the agency eliminate single-use products. The Trump Administration is returning the DOJ to its mission of enforcing the law, including laws regarding equal protection for Americans with disabilities.

The DOJ should vigorously defend the rights of individuals with disabilities in places of public accommodation. It will ensure that "establishments serving food or drink" provide every citizen with an equal opportunity to utilize a plastic straw. The DOJ should explore all avenues, including lawsuits against business establishments, to ensure full access and inclusion for all citizens seeking to properly consume beverages. It should also explore all necessary and proper legal avenues for addressing state and municipal laws that work against the goals of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The Department of Health and Human Services

The Biden Administration used HHS to attack plastic and promote so-call "sustainable" plastic-free products like paper straws. While on the clock, government employees at the FDA attended an event at the agency's headquarters where they signed pledges to reduce their consumption of plastic and use alternative products like paper straws ("Mobilizing Federal Action," 2024).

The Trump Administration is rolling back this waste of taxpayer dollars. HHS is already working to implement President Trump's executive order, and it already removed paper straws from its cafeteria. HHS can and should continue to take broader action to end paper straws.

The FDA has a mandate to regulate food contact substances, and it should protect the American people from unsafe paper straws.

The FDA is empowered to issue regulations “with respect to any particular use of a food additive” and “the conditions under which such additive may be safely used.” 21 USC § 348(d). Food contact substances can be regulated like food additives. 21 USC § 348(a)(3). The FDA should conduct an investigation to determine the health risks of paper straws being used as food contact substances.

The FDA can deem a food contact substance “adulterated” if it “contains any poisonous or deleterious substance which may render it injurious to health.” 21 USC § 342(a). Given the evidence that paper straws with PFAS chemicals could render beverages injurious to Americans' health, the FDA should consider restricting their use.

PFASs are also found in food packaging like carry-out containers and to-go boxes. Leading fast-food chains have publicly committed to reducing PFAS in their packaging and phasing them out entirely. While the FDA could consider future regulations targeting PFAS in food packaging, paper straws are likely a more pressing concern. Unlike disposable packaging, paper straws are uniquely designed to have the consumer directly ingest PFAS during use. Additionally, unlike food packaging, paper straws break down during use. As paper straws break down, they release harmful PFAS chemicals directly into beverages. To implement Executive Order 14208, the FDA should promptly consider the health and safety risks posed by paper straws.

U.S. Department of Agriculture

Just four days before President Trump took office, the Biden Administration's USDA rolled out a Contracting Desk Book to penalize government contractors using single-use plastics (“Contracting Desk Book,” 2025). The Trump Administration is already working to undo the paper straw mandate. The USDA confirmed that food vendors at its headquarters did not use paper straws and that they are not planning on procuring paper straws in the future. Additionally, it conducted a review of its purchase cards and ensured that none of them have been used to purchase paper straws. The USDA also reviewed its research programs and ensured that there is no research being conducted to promote paper straws or disparage plastic straws. The USDA is also working to ensure that its field offices do not procure any paper straws. Additionally, the USDA is ensuring that funds in grant agreements will not be used to purchase paper straws. The Secretary's office is also ensuring that the USDA will not promote the development or manufacturing of paper straws in the future.

Additionally, the USDA should reform its BioPreferred program. The Biden Administration used the BioPreferred program to promote paper straws in two ways. First, the BioPreferred program

requires that any products listed in its catalogue receive preferential treatment from federal agencies during the procurement process. Second, the USDA promotes products listed as part of the BioPreferred program and grants them the “USDA Certified Biobased Product” label. The two-fold nature of the BioPreferred program caused paper straws to be promoted in government contracting and in the private market.

The Biden Administration used both aspects of the BioPreferred program to promote paper straws. Both of these actions were erroneous, and the USDA should reform the BioPreferred program to end the use of paper straws.

The statute authorizing the BioPreferred program grants the Secretary of Agriculture, after consulting with the Administrator of General Services and the Secretary of Commerce, broad discretion in establishing procurement guidelines to encourage the federal acquisition of biobased products (7 USC § 8102(a)(3)(A)). The Secretary is empowered to “designate those items...that...can be produced with biobased products” (7 USC § 8102(a)(3)(B)(i)). Since paper cannot produce a well-functioning straw, all paper straws should be removed from the USDA guidelines, and the USDA should ensure that any listed biobased straws have the strength and durability of plastic straws.

Further, the Secretary is empowered to evaluate performance, environmental, and public health impacts of a product when making procurement guidelines (7 USC § 8102(a)(3)(B)(vii)). As demonstrated above, paper straws offer inferior performance, create no environmental benefit, and threaten public health. For all of these reasons, the Secretary of Agriculture is empowered to remove paper straws from the USDA’s BioPreferred program. To ensure that paper straws are not substituted with equally ineffective substitutes, the USDA should ensure that only products that meet durability and performance standards on par with plastic straws receive any preferential treatment under the BioPreferred guidelines.

The Secretary should go beyond merely ending preferences for paper straws in federal procurement. The policy of Executive Order 14208 is to end the use of paper straws nationwide. Therefore, the Secretary should also remove paper straws from the USDA’s voluntary labeling program. The goal of the USDA’s voluntary labeling program is to encourage private parties to purchase certified products (7 USC § 8102(b)(2)(B)(i)). Encouraging private parties to purchase paper straws directly conflicts with the President’s agenda to end the use of paper straws.

The statute directs the Secretary to ensure that the standards for the labeling program are consistent with the standards for the procurement guidelines (7 USC § 8102(b)(2)(B)(iii)). Since the procurement guidelines are authorized to account for performance, environmental, and public health concerns about products, the USDA should also consider these factors in the labeling program. As demonstrated above, paper straws do not offer performance, significant environmental, or public health benefits. To the contrary, they perform far worse than plastic straws, they offer virtually no environmental benefit, and they pose risks to public health. Since

paper straws fail on all of these factors, they should be ineligible for the USDA's Certified Biobased Product label.

The Secretary is authorized to carry out auditing and compliance activities to ensure that the label is only used on products that meet the stringent criteria for the label (7 USC § 8102(b)(3)). Therefore, the Secretary should ensure that no paper straws receive the label in the future and ensure that all paper straws that currently receive the label have their right to use the label revoked.

Environmental Protection Agency

The Biden Administration ignored the EPA's warnings on the risks of PFAS chemicals in its drive to promote paper straws. It unnecessarily endangered the federal government's own workforce by directing federal purchasing to prioritize paper straws through its EPA Ecolabels Program. Indeed, it promoted paper straws as safe and effective to the public through its EPA Ecolabels Program.

The Trump Administration's EPA should not ignore known risks to human health. It should not promote as safe what it knows to be dangerous. Therefore, it should remove paper straws entirely from its Ecolabels Program. Guided by the best available science, it should also identify and address all further concerns with PFAS chemicals in paper straws and mitigate unnecessary toxic exposure to humans.

Department of the Interior

Under the Biden Administration, DOI advocated for the total abolition of straws altogether. Secretary Haaland issued Secretary's Order No. 3407 to target all single-use plastic products, including containers, straws, cups, bags, etc. The order directed the agency's Chief Sustainability Officer to develop policies for procurement anywhere in the agency, including in concessionaires. The order further directed the agency to phase out all single-use plastic products by 2032. DOI implemented a "straws upon request" policy to reduce the number of straws used across its facilities. Yosemite National Park eliminated all single-use plastics, including plastic straws, in 2022. Presumably, the Biden Administration pushed all other national parks to also work to reduce single-use plastics and ban plastic straws.

Under President Trump, DOI is already working to undo the Biden Administration's harmful policies. The DOI ordered all bureaus and offices to immediately cease all purchases of paper straws. The DOI is also working on a Secretary's Order to repeal and replace the Biden Administration's order targeting all single-use plastic products. This new order will prohibit DOI from procuring any paper straws, and it will allow DOI and its vendors to procure plastic straws.

The DOI should ensure that Americans aren't burdened by the excesses of an environmentally dubious agenda as it executes its sacred trust to allow Americans to enjoy the awe and beauty of nature in America's majestic national parks.

Department of Commerce

The Biden Administration used the DOC and NOAA to promote paper straws on a scientifically misguided basis. Its Green Grants were used to remove single-use plastic straws.

The Trump Administration's DOC should follow better evidence toward a new policy. It is already implementing President Trump's executive order, and it has instructed all bureaus to prohibit the use of paper straws in all new and existing contracts performed within federal buildings. This policy reform includes the contract for the newly reopened cafeteria in the Herbert C. Hoover Building. Further, the Department instructed all offices and bureaus not to have any policies against plastic straws.

The DOC should ensure that the Trump Administration is guided by the best available science, and it should thoroughly examine the supply chains and countries of origin for paper straws as part of this Administration's strategy to end their use in the United States.

Department of Energy

DOE is already working to implement President Trump's executive order. The DOE has ordered the elimination of all paper straw usage at its 30+ sites nationwide. The DOE has also reviewed all internal guidance documents and confirmed there are no requirements directing the procurement of paper straws specifically.

Because the Biden Administration used the DOE to advance its anti-plastic policies, the Department should conduct a thorough review of all of its policies to ensure that there are no remaining policies favoring paper straws or disparaging the use of plastic straws.

Federal Acquisition Regulatory Council

The Federal Acquisition Regulatory Council assists in developing procurement policy for the federal government. In coordination with the Office of Federal Procurement Policy, the Council should amend the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) to ensure that no federal agency procures paper straws.

The FAR should be updated to include a performance requirement that beverage straws procured and used under federal contracts have the strength and durability of plastic straws. Additionally, the FAR should be updated to include a provision that requires all government contractors to represent that they do not use paper straws or penalize the use of plastic straws.

General Services Administration

The federal government is the largest buyer of goods and services in the world, spending approximately \$490 billion per year on federal contracts. The GSA oversees many of these contracts and works to ensure that federal policies are promoted in government contracts. The GSA plays an important role in ensuring that the federal government does not use its market power to purchase paper straws or support companies that penalize the use of plastic straws.

The Biden Administration used the GSA to develop federal anti-plastic policies. Under Joe Biden, the GSA finalized a rule that encourages federal contractors to identify single-use plastic packaging (48 CFR 552.238-118). The GSA runs the Green Procurement Compilation website, which facilitates anti-plastic procurement practices. Requests for bids for food service contracts include language asking contractors to explain their plan to “minimize plastic content.” A sample “instructions to offerors” memo for food service providers includes anti-plastic straw language.

Under President Trump’s leadership, the GSA has already started the important work of implementing Executive Order 14208. Just days after President Trump signed his executive order, the GSA issued a deviation to the FAR prohibiting government agencies from wasting taxpayer dollars on the procurement of paper straws.

The GSA should continue its work implementing President Trump’s executive order and thoroughly review cafeteria and food services sample contracts promoted by the Green Procurement Compilation and remove any language encouraging contractors to use paper straws or avoid plastic straws. Additionally, the GSA should thoroughly review all of the Biden Administration’s anti-plastic regulations and ensure that none of the provisions targeting plastic straws remain.

Office of Management and Budget

OMB oversees federal agencies, and it should carry out an extensive review of federal policies to ensure that no agency promotes paper straws or disparages the use of plastic straws. To that end, OMB should issue a controller alert informing agency Chief Financial Officers that no federal funds can go towards the acquisition of paper straws. Issuing a controller alert would allow Executive Order 14208 to take effect rapidly and begin to shape federal policy before the FAR can be formally updated.

Additionally, OMB should develop guidelines to ensure that no taxpayer dollars are spent on any grant that is designed to promote paper straws, disparage plastic straws, or otherwise undermine Executive Order 14208. The policy of the United States is to end the use of paper straws, and every tax dollar spent should be in full alignment with this policy.

United States Agency for International Development

Under the Biden Administration, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) wasted countless taxpayer dollars. One particularly egregious example of government waste involved a grant program where USAID paid an NGO to help promote grass straws and eliminate plastic straws in Vietnam's Phu Quoc's hospitality sector. The Biden Administration was so proud of this use of taxpayer dollars that it highlighted this program in a White House report ("Mobilizing Federal Action," 2024).

President Trump ended this waste of taxpayer dollars when he ended the rampant waste, fraud, and abuse at USAID.

CONCLUSION: THE LAST STRAW

Americans deserve better than paper straws. According to the full body of scientific research, paper straws lack structural integrity, pose safety risks to children and people with disabilities, contain chemicals linked to serious health conditions, and cost more than plastic straws. In exchange for suffering these substantial costs, limiting plastic straws offers virtually no environmental benefits. The science is clear: banning plastic straws imposes real costs on the American people in exchange for no meaningful benefits.

Despite the scientific evidence and strong consumer preference for plastic straws, the Biden Administration implemented a government-wide campaign against plastic straws. The Trump Administration has undone this weaponization of government and will use all available levers to bring back common sense, end the use of paper straws, and restore functional utensils for the American people.

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