



# BREAK FREE FROM PLASTIC POLLUTION ACT

*Introduced by Senator Merkley and Representative Lowenthal*

Plastic pollution is a crisis threatening our public health, our climate, our economy, and our planet. Plastic production and waste is fueling climate change and poisoning our bodies through the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the food we eat. And unless we act, things are only going to get worse. **The *Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act***, from U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR) and U.S. Representative Alan Lowenthal (D-CA) is the national strategy we need to address this growing crisis.

**Plastic pollution has exploded into a global crisis that threatens our public health, economic security, and the future of our planet.**

- Studies suggest that humans swallow a credit card's worth of plastic every week. Exposure to plastic toxins has been linked to cancers, birth defects, and other ailments.
- The United States disposes or incinerates 32 million tons of plastic waste each year, burdening our local government budgets and overwhelming systems to handle it.
- Our recycling system is broken: just 8% of plastic waste in the United States is sorted for recycling, and less than 3% of plastic waste is recycled into a similar quality product.
- Global plastic production will triple by 2050, accounting for 20% of global oil consumption and emissions linked to plastic will reach 1.3 billion tons by 2030, equal to 300 coal-fired power plants.
- Emissions from plastic production and waste management facilities are disproportionately impacting low-income and minority communities, perpetuating the harm of historic environmental injustices.

**Americans are fed up with the plastic pollution crisis and broadly support many steps to tackle the plastic pollution crisis.** Recent polling shows that two-thirds of Americans believe that businesses that produce or use plastics in their products should pay for collecting, sorting, and recycling plastics.

**The *Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act* will provide national leadership to reduce the amount of wasteful plastic produced and reforming our broken waste and recycling systems. The bill will shift the burden of cleanup and waste management to where it belongs: on the corporations that produce this waste, by –**

- Requiring big corporations take responsibility for their pollution, requiring producers of plastic products to design, manage, and finance waste and recycling programs.
- Spurring innovation, incentivizing big corporations to make reusable products and items that can actually be recycled.
- Creating a nationwide beverage container refund program, which is successful at the state level.
- Reducing and ban certain single-use plastic products that are not recyclable.
- Establishing minimum recycled content requirements for beverage containers, packaging, and food-service products.
- Generating massive investments in domestic recycling and composting infrastructure, while pressing pause on new plastic facilities until critical environment and health protections are put in place.

**Together we can tackle plastic pollution with the bold action – but we must act now, before it's too late.**