**California becomes first U.S. state to ban plastic grocery bags**

(by Aaron Mendelson, Reuters)  SAN FRANCISCO – Single-use plastic bags are set to disappear from California grocery stores over the next two years under a first-in-the-nation state law signed on Tuesday by Democratic Governor Jerry Brown, despite opposition from bag manufacturers.

**Text Rendering**

Highlight 3 words YELLOW that stand out to you, that you don’t know, or that you like.

Highlight 3 phrases GREEN that support the author’s idea.

Highlight the author’s thesis BLUE; his/her main idea

The law would ban grocery stores from handing out such bags with customers’ purchases….  SB270 provides $2 million in competitive loans to help plastic bag manufacturers convert their operations to produce reusable bags. Grocers will be required to charge at least 10 cents for each recycled paper bag or reusable bag provided to a customer.

“This bill is a step in the right direction – it reduces the torrent of plastic polluting our beaches, parks and even the vast ocean itself,” Brown said in a statement. “We’re the first to ban these bags, and we won’t be the last.”

A number of cities and counties in California and other U.S. states, including Hawaii’s Maui County, have made it illegal for grocery stores to pack purchases in plastic. But at the state level, opposition from plastic bag makers has usually prevailed.

Environmentalists have pushed to ban plastic bags, which are cheaper for supermarkets to use than paper bags but create mountains of trash that is difficult to recycle. In California, there is particular concern that the bags, when swept out to sea, could cause injury to ocean life. [Each year, California spends $25 million to dispose of 14 billion plastic bags used annually, according to a legislative analysis of the bill.]

Under the new law, grocery stores and pharmacies are required to stop providing single-use plastic bags by July 2015, while convenience and liquor stores will have an additional year to phase them out.

The law will have a “very negative” impact on plastic bag manufacturers, possibly leading to layoffs, said Cathy Browne, general manager at one such manufacturer, Crown Poly, in Huntington Park, California.

“We’re obviously disappointed that it’s been signed into law, because consumers will pay for something that’s already in the cost of goods. And it’s going to 100 percent profit the grocers,” she said.

More than 10 billion plastic bags are used in California each year, according to an estimate by Californians Against Waste, and advocacy group that supports the law.

California’s bill stalled in the state’s Assembly in August, but after picking up the support of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, it garnered the votes to get to Brown’s desk. A similar measure failed in the legislature last year.

Opponents of the bill said the statewide plastic bag ban is government overreach, while others argued that the per bag fee grocers will charge will amount to a windfall that essentially allows customers to be charged twice since the cost of carry out bags are already factored into store prices.

“We’re basically implementing a tax, a 10 cent charge per bag on our constituents,” said Sen. Ted Gaines, R-Rocklin, before Brown signed the bill. “It’s actually a profit center for grocers, because the cost of the bag is 2 to 3 cents, but the charge is going to be 10 cents. I find that quite frankly outrageous.”

#### Questions

1. Who signed the California plastic bag bill into law this week?

2. What exactly will the law require?

3. What is significant about the passage of this law?

4. Who opposes the law? Why?

5. What type of impact do you think this law will have on families doing the grocery shopping (inconvenience/extra cost)?

6. Schools have been successful in teaching kids to recycle. Do you think they could be just as successful with a “Don’t litter” campaign? (Could a lot of the plastic bags and other garbage that makes its way into waterways be stopped by a concentrated effort to avoid/clean up litter?) Explain your answer.

7. Opponents of the bill said the statewide plastic bag ban is government overreach. What do you think of this assertion? Explain your answer.