

NEWS

RENSSELAER COUNTY LEGISLATURE

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COUNTY LEGISLATURE SUPPORTS LIMITING USE OF STYROFOAM

The Rensselaer County Legislature voted overwhelmingly to support limits on the use of styrofoam in the food industry. The resolution introduced by Legislator Peter Grimm of Troy supports New York State Senator Liz Krueger's bill which addresses the environmental impacts of Styrofoam and allows for exceptions where there is no viable alternative product at comparable cost.

According to Grimm who serves on the Legislature's Environment Committee, "Prohibiting the use of certain food packaging and plastic food service ware will clean up our waste stream and make us more environmentally sustainable."

"Limiting styrofoam is also a matter of protecting the health and well-being of individuals. Many people do not realize that when they re-heat food in a Styrofoam container, using a microwave, toxins are released into their food," Grimm noted.

Grimm believes, "It is important for the County Legislature to exercise environmental stewardship and leadership on issues like styrofoam limitation."

Styrofoam is a notorious pollutant that is very difficult to recycle due to its light weight and low scrap value. It is generally not accepted in curbside programs, is seldom able to be reused, takes up a considerable amount of space in landfills, and takes a very long time to fully decompose.

Each year Americans throw away 25 billion Styrofoam cups, or 1,369 tons of Styrofoam products every day. A single Styrofoam cup can take up to 500 years to fully disintegrate. One of the chemicals in Styrofoam, technically called Styrene, is known to be hazardous and suspected to be a cancer-causing substance and neurotoxin.

Due to the physical properties of polystyrene, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has stated "that such materials can have serious impact on human health, wildlife, and the aquatic environment" because the product breaks down and can clog waterways, or be mistaken for food by wildlife.