According to the Environmental Protection Agency, between 500 billion and 1 trillion plastic bags are distributed worldwide each year. The United States contributes over a billion of these, dispensing 3 million plastic bags every day. It is time for Massachusetts to follow the example others have set around the country and around the world, and respond to the dangers posed by plastic bags. Bill S.353: An Act Relative to Plastic Bag Reduction (2009), is necessary for the environmental, economic, and social well-being of the Commonwealth.

**The Bill**

**Elevator Speech**
We all want to do what’s right for the environment, but sometimes it’s too expensive or too difficult. This is not one of those times. Plastic bags take a needless toll on the planet, and every day we sit idle is a death sentence for over 2.7 million animals. These bags cannot be digested and do not break down on their own for 300-1,000 years. This means that the pieces of one plastic bag can kill countless animals. These bags are not necessary, and yet the US produces over 100 billion of them each year. Over 90% of these are distributed by large businesses.

It is time to make the right choice, and ban these bags in Massachusetts. Bill H.1990 would require large businesses to distribute only reusable or biodegradable bags. This is a simple change that would have a monumental impact. You can make a difference in the lives of billions and make Massachusetts a leader by pushing for a vote on bill H.1990 to move it out of the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture and into the House Ways and Means Committee. Animal lives are at stake, and our beautiful landscapes risk being ruined for our future generations. The time to act is now.
**Excerpts from Campaign Journals**

**Jessi**

Our first coalition meeting went very well. Jesse and I Skyped with Phil Sego of the Sierra Club. Phil was passionate and well versed on the issue, and we exchanged facts and stories that could be used to grab a listener. In Phil's experience, the ecological implications of plastic bags were significantly more useful for persuasion, because they are so much larger than the economic ones. The main reason that Phil got involved with the ban the bag movement was because of the number of migratory bird species going extinct each year as a direct result.

Even more beneficial, however, was how well he knew the State House. Phil was able to tell us which representatives were important to see, what would motivate them, and what to expect when we walked into their office. This was hugely beneficial in preparing me for our visit, both with a plan of attack and with instilled confidence. I would definitely recommend groups with environmental bills contact the Sierra Club.

**Jesse**

Our second meeting about the bill was once we got to the State House, with Representative Christopher Markey from the Committee on the Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture. We went to the State House to try to convince the committee members to get the bill to a vote, and get it to the House Ways and Means Committee so it could be considered in this upcoming year's budget.

We tried to talk to all the senators and representatives on the Committee that day, but besides Markey we only spoke to legislative aides. Markey was one person Phil wasn't sure about, as in whether he would be supportive or not. When we walked in, we saw an “Eat Local Local Hero” bumpersticker on his desk, and pictures of children in frames sitting next to it. He saw a framed letter and drawing from a child thanking him for his support on the Bottle Bill. We exchanged a glance, and were excited by these encouraging signs.

We gave him our elevator speech and he seemed receptive. We were a bit nervous and didn't say everything exactly how we wanted to say it, but we got the point across. We had gone in intending to go to him first to use him as practice before going to Gobi and Pacheco, yet ironically he was the only legislator we spoke to in person. He chimed in every once in a while about how he had heard about all the animal lives plastic bags took, and that he thought it was an important issue. He said he would support it. He really did seem to care about what we had to say, and although we were nervous in the moment, in retrospect it was a very easygoing conversation, just like a peer-to-peer conversation. When we left we gave him a storybook flyer, which we had been showing him the whole time. We left with the sense that we had an ally in our corner.

#### Update

The bill was incorporated into Senate Bill S.2314. (This bill also contains H.1159 and H.1990, which were House drafts of the same bill.) As of June 20, 2012 the bill was favorably reported out of the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture and was referred to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means.

For more information

http://www.sierraclubmass.org/pb/thebill.html