

Trump Signs Executive Order to Reinstate Plastic Straws

President Trump signed an executive order eliminating the procurement of paper straws in federal operations, calling them ineffective. The order reverses Biden-era environmental policies and reignites debates over plastic waste and consumer convenience.

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In a move that reverses environmental policies set by the previous administration, President Donald Trump has signed an executive order to end the procurement and forced use of paper straws within federal operations. This decision was announced on Monday, February 10, in the Oval Office, where Trump stated, "We're going back to plastic straws. These things don't work. I've had them many times, and on occasion, they break, they explode."

A bill sponsored by former Senator Janelle Sarauw led to the [enactment of a U.S. Virgin Islands law](#) prohibiting the use of plastic bags and straws, but enforcement has been inconsistent. In many cases, the law has primarily increased costs for consumers rather than eliminating plastic waste. Previously, plastic bags were provided for free at grocery stores, but now customers must pay for bags, even when they are not biodegradable.

The plastic straw ban has also led to hygiene concerns for consumers. Without straws, customers are forced to drink directly from cups that may have been sitting out in fast-food restaurants, where employees handle the cups near the rim when securing lids. This raises sanitation concerns, as customers may be exposed to germs from prolonged restaurant storage and handling. Additionally, the lack of straws creates challenges for children, particularly when drinking in moving vehicles, often leading to spills and inconvenience.

Trump has long been vocal about his disdain for paper straws, criticizing their functionality. During his campaign in 2020, he remarked, "They want to ban straws. Has anyone tried those paper straws? They're not working too good." This sentiment was echoed in his recent statement where he described the situation as "ridiculous" and noted that paper straws do not hold up well, particularly with hot beverages.

The push to eliminate plastic straws began gaining traction in the late 2010s, largely due to a viral video showing a sea turtle with a plastic straw stuck in its nose, highlighting the environmental impact of single-use plastics. By 2018, Seattle became the first U.S. city to ban plastic straws, followed by several states and cities implementing similar restrictions. The Biden administration had further pushed for a federal phase-out of single-use plastics, including straws, with a target to end procurement by 2027.

According to the executive order, federal agencies are now directed to review their procurement processes to allow the use of plastic straws again. The order explicitly states that agency heads must "take all appropriate action to eliminate the procurement of paper straws and otherwise ensure that paper straws are no longer provided within agency buildings." This move is part of a broader initiative by the Trump administration to roll back several environmental regulations, including withdrawing from the Paris Climate Agreement and promoting oil and gas expansion.

The decision has sparked a debate on environmental policy. Critics argue that plastic straws significantly contribute to ocean pollution and harm marine life, while supporters of the order, including some in the plastic manufacturing industry, see it as a return to practicality. Matt Seaholm, president and CEO of the Plastics Industry Association, commented, "'Back to Plastic' is a movement we should all get behind." However, environmental advocates like Christy Leavitt from Oceana believe this move is "more about messaging than finding solutions," pointing out the broader crisis of plastic pollution affecting oceans and public health.

While federal policy can override state laws in certain cases, states like New Jersey, which implemented a ban on automatic provision of plastic straws, might not be directly affected unless there is further legal intervention. The executive order sets the stage for potential legal battles over state versus federal environmental regulations.