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Plastic straws are creating an environmental hazard

SB 90: Bans single-use plastic straws unless requested by customer

SALEM – A video of a wild turtle having a plastic straw tugged out of a nostril with a pair of pliers has triggered a series of laws to ban single-use plastic straws, and Oregon is moving in that direction.

[Senate Bill 90](#) – which passed with a 23-6 vote on the Senate floor today – prohibits food and beverage establishments from providing single-use plastic straws, unless requested by the customer. Drive-through customers still can be offered straws, under the bill.

“We use a straw for less than an hour, but it continues to exist in nature for longer than our lifetime,” said Sen. Michael Dembrow (D-Portland), who carried the bill on the Senate floor. “We can use a straw, throw it away and forget about it as an inconsequential part of our lives. But that straw can easily end up in the ocean or somewhere else in nature. There, a single straw can have significant and sometimes deadly impacts on animals. The viral video of a turtle having a straw painfully removed from its nostril provides clear evidence that our seemingly inconsequential acts have significant consequences for other creatures.”

Several cities have banned providing plastic straws to consumers, including Seattle, San Diego, Miami and New York City. Certain establishments are not allowed to provide single-use plastic straws and other disposable utensils unless the customer requests them. Some companies – including Starbucks, American Airlines and Hyatt – also are phasing out plastic straws in their business practices. California became the first state to pass legislation prohibiting full-service restaurants from giving consumers single-use plastic straws, unless they are requested.

Plastic straws are among the top 10 most commonly found items during beach cleanups, according to representatives of the Surfrider Foundation, and in the last 10 years more than 4 million straws and stirrers have been picked up during the group's International Coastal Cleanup events. Researchers in 2015 found that at least 690 species worldwide on land and sea have encountered marine debris. Of those encounters, 92 percent included plastic.

Senate Bill 90 now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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