



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Assemblyman Luis Sepúlveda's Great Idea

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| ISSUE: **PLASTIC BAG FEE, ENVIRONMENT, SENIOR CITIZENS, POOR, NEEDY**

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

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Assemblyman Luis Sepúlveda's Great Idea

You should know that Assemblyman Luis Sepúlveda, Senator Marisol Alcantara and I have joined together and submitted a piece of joint-legislation to help resolve some of the environmental problems caused by plastic bags.

As you know, the Members of the New York City Council, under the direct leadership of Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, approved legislation to force every consumer, including senior citizens, the poor, the needy and everyone who shops in the five boroughs of the City of New York to pay 5-cents (5¢) to the merchant for each plastic bag they used while shopping.

According to Melissa Mark Viverito and the Members of the City Council, this 5-cents (5¢) imposition per plastic bag was done with the purpose of cleaning up the environment, and doing away with the infestation of plastic bags on New York City streets.

According to their legislation, when the consumer goes to the supermarket, bodega or other retail establishments, he or she will be forced to pay 5-cents (5¢) for each plastic bag they use. Can anyone imagine why this 5-cents (5¢) per bag fee should then be kept by the storeowner, not the government. This was all done in the name of cleaning the environment.

As you know, our fight and participation in support of Senator Simcha Felder's effort to do away with this injustice toward the consumer was joined by Republicans in the Senate, and we were victorious.

And, as I have explained to you in my earlier columns, of the six Hispanic Senators: Marisol Alcantara, José Serrano, José Peralta, Martin Malavé Dilan, Gustavo Rivera and myself, only two of us, José Peralta and I were the only ones who voted against the imposition of the 5-cents (5¢) penalty. The other four voted in favor of forcing senior citizens, the poor, the needy and every other consumer in the City of New York to pay 5-cents (5¢) per plastic bag while shopping.

You should also know that after the New York Senate voted to stop it, the Speaker of the Assembly, the Honorable Carl Heastie and the Members of the Assembly did the same and joined with the Republicans in voting to stop this injustice that was set to go into effect on February 15, 2107.

And, our beloved Governor Andrew Cuomo then put the City Council's legislation in checkmate by signing into law the Senate and Assembly's joint legislation to postpone all of this for one year while studies could be done to find better environmental solutions than having the consumer pay this 5-cents (5¢) fee.

It is very important for you to know that without waiting one year, and almost immediately, Assemblyman Luis Sepúlveda came up with a marvelous idea to introduce another piece of

legislation, which Senator Marisol Alcantara and I joined in sponsoring.

The great idea that Assemblyman Sepúlveda introduced in the Assembly is to actually help clean up the environment and take plastic bags off the streets. Instead of forcing consumers to pay 5-cents (5¢) that the storeowners keep per plastic bag, to pay consumers 3-cents (3¢) for each plastic bag that they re-use.

If the problem, as explained by Melissa Mark-Viverito and Members of the New York City Council, is to take plastic bags off the streets and to clean the environment, I don't see why there shouldn't be a way for the consumer to be rewarded with 3-cents (3¢) per bag, if in all honesty, the idea was to clean the environment.

I imagine there would be no reason why, with Assemblyman Sepulveda's great idea, that those elected officials who were in favor of forcing consumers to pay 5-cents (5¢) per plastic bag to clean the environment would oppose this new proposed legislation.

I see no reason why any elected officials would want senior citizens, the poor, the needy, and hard working New Yorkers to be forced to pay 5-cents (5¢) per plastic bag, instead of paying shoppers 3-cents (3¢) per plastic bag they reuse in order to help clean the environment.

Honorable New York City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito and Members of the New York City Council: the ball is in your court.

I am Senator Reverend Rubén Díaz, and this is what you should know.