

I am Betsy Martin, President of the Friends of Little Hunting Creek. Little Hunting Creek is a tributary of the Potomac River in Fairfax County. I speak in support of SB925.

Since 2002, the Friends have conducted annual cleanups of Little Hunting Creek. Since we started keeping records 10 years ago, we've collected almost 3000 bags of trash, including thousands and thousands of plastic bags.

The trash just keeps coming year after year, because there's no effective deterrent for litterers, no incentive for them to stop littering. The burden of their careless and anti-social behavior falls on us, the volunteers, who pick up their litter, on local governments who dispose of the trash we collect, and on businesses, who have to pay employees to pick up litter. And the costs of litter fall on our communities, on property values, on tourism. Little Hunting Creek is just upstream from the Mount Vernon Estate. The litter we don't collect pollutes the shoreline and Potomac River waters in front of our first President's home. Don't tell me that plastic bag litter all along Virginia's Potomac River shoreline lures tourists to our beautiful state.

It's not sustainable. We don't mind working to keep our stream clean and beautiful, but we need help from you. Volunteers can't do this alone. We need your help to create laws that will get people to change their behavior, and this bill would help.

The Alice Ferguson Foundation, which sponsors the annual Potomac Watershed Cleanup and provides our supplies, did a study to learn the impact of Washington DC's tax on plastic bags. After the law went into effect in 2010, there was a decline of 72% in the number of plastic bags volunteers picked up per cleanup site. The DC law worked!

We Virginia volunteers would love to pick up fewer plastic bags, too. A bag tax works to reduce plastic bag litter. It has been supported by the citizens of the Mount Vernon magisterial district in resolutions passed in 2011 and in 2013 by the Mount Vernon Council of Citizens' Associations. We do not want plastic bags littering our roadways, hanging in trees, polluting our streams. I urge you to vote for this bill.