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Conflict and History Case Study

**Description of the History in Florida**

Increasing concern over plastic has been on the rise since the 1990s, especially towards plastics in the ocean. Ye and Andrary (1991), suggest that plastic waste in marine environments is a relatively recent phenomenon and is attributed to commercial fishing and gear. They also concluded that floating plastic debris are normally held in the water column where larger marine mammals can be affected. Schnurr et al. 2018, mentions that both legislative and non-legislative interventions could help prevent single-use plastics (like straws) in the marine environment. Their research was testing out non-legislative methods, but for my case study I will focus on legislative policies that are being reviewed in the State of Florida. There is a large concern about the cleanliness of the Florida coastlines, due to Florida being a heavy tourism state, the straw ban has been a very popular topic. People are also very generally concerned over single- use plastics affecting marine life and threatening their overall existence (Derraik 2002). Beck (1991) describes the growing interest on the impact of plastic debris on Florida manatees, basically concluding that the debris are from local sources from residential and commercial boating fishing communities.

“In 2008, the Legislature enacted a similar law requiring the Department of Environmental Protection to analyze “the need for new or different regulation of auxiliary containers, wrappings, or disposable plastic bags used by consumers to carry products from retail establishments” (1).

As of April 30th, 2019, Florida’s local governments have prohibited local governments from enacting bans on plastic straws. In March, a bill was passed for cities and local governments to decide if they wanted to ban the straws, but this was overturned. In a mostly Republican vote, the Florida Senate passed HB 771, which prohibits county and city government from enforcing regulations on plastic straws for the next five years. The bill that was passed will also require that cities or counties will need to provide “data and conclusions” to support passing a straw law. Some cities, before this bill was passed, have already adopted straw regulations including Miami Beach in 2012. Regardless if the locals support a straw ban, the city officials will not be in a position to enforce the ban on restaurants according to the Florida Senate. The debate of this issues is giving back power to cities and counties to make their own decisions on whether they can or cannot ban straws if they so choose to. This ban also takes away power from the residents because they will not be able to voice their concerns to their local governments effectively, since their local governments will not be able to pass any laws or policy changes for 5 years (2).

**The Passage of Time**

The hype for these types of law are relatively new, so there is not a long passage of time on this topic.

**Strangers**

Strangers that would be affected by the straw ban could be disabled and elderly people who require straws to drink at a restaurant (2).

**Description of current status in Gainesville, FL**

On May 10, 2019 Governor Ron DeSantis used his veto power for the first time, declining to sign an environmental bill that would have prohibited local governments from banning plastic straws for the next five years. “The state should simply allow local communities to address this issue through the political process,” DeSantis wrote. “Citizens who oppose plastic straw ordinances can seek recourse by electing people who share their views“(1).

There has been a flip-flop over this bill for the past several months. Due to Governor Ron DeSantis using his veto power, local governments can make their own decisions about the matter. Other cities have passed straw bans such as St. Petersburg, Miami Beach, and Ft. Myers. On May 17, 2019 Gainesville, FL began voting on the plastic straw ban, and there is expected to be a final result in June sometime. As of yet, there is no news on the final verdict. Even though the plastic straw ban has not been formally added as a policy, there have been many that have started to practice the straw ban policy.

Depending on what the City of Gainesville decides, this choice could lead to a different conflict. The original conflict was that the local governments wanted to choose whether or not they wanted to implement their own straw ban. The conflict that could now arise is if the people are on board for the decisions made by the city officials.

**Incomplete information**

The State of Florida is allowing for local governments to make their own decisions about the straw ban. However, there is still a lengthy process to allow for each county or city to make the regulation stick. Many local governments will need to conduct surveys and investigations to see if the straw ban will be beneficial to their community before they can request a regulation be implemented.

“The study would focus on the “data and conclusions” used in adopting local ordinances instead of the environmental impacts, which had irked environmental groups that argue that there’s enough evidence of the effect of plastic pollution” (1).

There are no true studies on the effects of only single use plastic straws in Gainesville, FL. Since there is no published study, there is lack of information for both the city officials and the residents of Gainesville.

**Integration of Course Concepts**

* **The focus is on solving a problem**

It looks like there is a solution currently for the people that want the straw ban to be implement by local governments. Other people that are concerned about the ban are elderly and disabled not wanting their freedoms infringed upon. It is unclear what the conflict is at this moment, since the issue is ongoing and just changed.

* **Parties meet face to face to work out differences**

Since Gainesville is still deciding the vote on the straw ban, there is not a timeline yet on whether the city officials will meet face to face with the residents. However, it would be useful if they do meet with the residents after the verdict sometime this month, to go over concerns about the straw ban and how it will impact the community.

**References**

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