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Lawmakers Consider Ban On Styrofoam Containers

Restaurant Association Says Use Product For Energy

POSTED: 10:53 am HST January 30, 2008

UPDATED: 11:30 am HST January 30, 2008

HONOLULU -- Your favorite plate lunch could soon come in a different container.

Lawmakers are considering a ban on Styrofoam takeout containers.

Hawaii ranks as the highest state with residents who order takeout food. That means more non-biodegradable containers crowding state landfills.

"Styrofoam is bad for two major reasons: it takes hundreds, thousands of years to decompose in our landfills or it is burned at h-power and dangerous chemicals leach from the Styrofoam into our ecosystems," said George White of Stop Styrofoam Hawaii.

Lawmakers on Tuesday listened to the pros and cons of a Styrofoam container ban.

"We are opposed to it because it is a way of providing safe sanitary food bacteria free to the consumers, and the solution? It is not banning, but utilizing it for energy," said Dick Botti of the Hawaii Food Industry Association.

"It would be very detrimental to our company. We would probably put 100 employees out of work," said Gilbert Yamada of Hawaii Foam Products.

Town and Downtown Restaurant already use a biodegradable alternative takeout boxes made from sugar cane waste. Each box costs about 10 cents more than Styrofoam.

"If I look at the whole picture, you know, the rewards associated environmentally and socially far outweigh what ever impact negligible impact is has on my economic bottom line," Town and Downtown Restaurant owner Ed Kenney said.

About 100 other mainland cities already have a similar Styrofoam ban in place.

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