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QuickPoint! – Plastic Straw Ban Isn't Environmentalism—It's Virtue Signaling

By Miranda Dawson

What's the deal with plastic straws?

Heartbreaking images of sea turtles afflicted by soda straws may be distressing, but well-researched environmentalists know that the best way to save the seas isn't [banning Seattle's straws](#). Not only are such bans a disadvantage to the [disabled people who rely on plastic straws](#) in their daily lives, but they don't really clean up the oceans. (For instance, Starbucks' move to straw-free lids will [actually use more plastic](#).)

[It's estimated](#) that more than a quarter of the ocean's plastic pollutants originate in just ten rivers in Asia and Africa with insufficient waste management practices. So banning straws and other plastics isn't environmentalism, it's virtue signaling.

Expanding the nanny state won't save the sea turtles. To really take the trash out of the oceans, we should be focusing our energies on promoting effective waste management practices. Organizations like the Asian Development Bank and the Asia Foundation [inform local governments](#) and [empower local communities](#) to mitigate their waste management problems. Meanwhile, proper recycling, voluntarily avoiding disposable plastics, and community beach cleanups are all accessible solutions for everyday environmentalists.

Miranda Bonifield is Research Associate at Cascade Policy Institute, Oregon's free market public policy research organization.

