

The Connecticut General Assembly



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Environment Committee Co-Chairs Host Earth Day at the Capitol

State Representative James Albis (D-East Haven) and **State Senator Ted Kennedy Jr. (D-Branford)** held an Earth Day Rally on the State Capitol steps alongside local college students and environmental activists and advocacy groups in support of environmental stewardship legislation, namely [SB 349](#) *An Act Concerning Single-Use Carryout Plastic and Paper Bags and the Use of Reusable Bags* and [HB 5286](#), *An Act Prohibiting the Import and Sale of Cosmetics that Contain Microbeads*, and measures aimed at reducing the use of harmful pesticides in the state of Connecticut.

“Earth Day reminds us to call attention to the variety of ways we can help preserve and protect our planet. While tackling climate change, eliminating poverty, and moving toward a more sustainable, zero-waste economy seem like insurmountable issues to solve, there is reason for hope. The legislature has the power this session to pass two bills that would phase out single-use plastic bags and eliminate the sale of cosmetics containing harmful microbeads. I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting these two initiatives for the sake of our planet and for the sake of future generations,” said **State Representative James Albis**, co-chair of the Environment Committee.

“Connecticut consumers discard millions of single-use plastic bags every year, and it is time that we stop this dangerous habit that clogs our waste stream and pollutes our waterways,” said **Senator Ted Kennedy, Jr.**, Senate Chair of the Environment Committee. “Plastic bags and cosmetics using microbeads have done significant damage to our environment. Rhode Island had to clean 4,300 of these bags off the coastline in the past two years. On Earth Day we need to renew our commitment to being good environmental stewards, and make steps toward preserving the natural world that we want to leave behind for our children.”

If passed, SB 349 would phase out use of single-use plastic bags in favor of environmentally-friendly reusable bags. Students at UConn recently circulated a petition in support of banning the single-use bags. HB 5286 would ban the import or sale of products containing microbeads. Some cosmetics products such as facial scrubs, utilize microbeads, or small plastic components measured five millimeters or less. Microbeads pollute the environment as they are not biodegradable and pose a danger to aquatic life that often mistake the microbeads for food.

"We need to use every tool at our disposal to protect our land, water, air, wildlife and public health. Earth Day puts a spotlight on our environment at the State Capitol and on the positions our state

legislators can take that positively impact the planet,” said **Lori Brown**, Connecticut League of Conservation Voters Executive Director

“This Earth Day, we are calling on our lawmakers to advance commonsense legislation that will protect clean water and the health of our children,” said **Louis Burch** of Citizens Campaign for the Environment. “From reducing single use shopping bags that are littering our communities, to banning plastic microbeads in personal care products that are fouling our waters, to eliminating toxic pesticides at children’s parks and playgrounds, the legislature has the opportunity to choose the public need over industry greed. It’s what the public demands and what our children deserve!”

“The first Earth Day inspired everyday citizens and government leaders to work together to create a safer, healthier environment for people and wildlife,” said **Stewart Hudson**, Executive Director of Audubon Connecticut. “This year, thanks to the leadership of Senator Kennedy, Representative Albis and many other state lawmakers, we are poised to make new progress: reducing dangerous litter from plastic bags; decreasing unnecessary pesticide exposure; phasing out plastic microbeads in our waters; enhancing funding for parks and protecting open space and Long Island Sound. Audubon knows that where birds thrive, people prosper. The Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon here today are a testament to how changing our behavior can change the environment for the better. These birds – once almost extinct as a result of pesticide overuse – are making a comeback and both are now found nesting in the City of Hartford. Let’s keep the spirit of Earth Day alive by passing this suite of bills that will ensure healthier communities for people and birds in the future.”

David Sutherland, the Nature Conservancy’s Connecticut Chapter director of government relations, noted the bi-partisan support for the legislation. “Connecticut has a history of both political parties uniting to protect this critical environmental, recreational, and economic resource, and we are very grateful for the leadership this legislation has enjoyed from Democrats and Republicans,” he said.

“To protect planet Earth protect water. Without water the planet is barren rock. Rivers Alliance thanks those Connecticut legislators who are striving this year to reduce the huge quantities of pesticides and plastics fouling our waters -- and striving to protect headwaters and shorelines by saving the natural landscape that buffers them from trash and toxins. This could be a good year for earth and water in Connecticut,” said **Margaret Miner**, Rivers Alliance of Connecticut.