A Senate Resolution reaffirming the Undergraduate Student Body’s vote in favor of waste reduction efforts.

SR-FA-16-103

Whereas: Climate change is a real and present danger for members of the Northeastern University community. Human activities have caused carbon levels in the Earth’s atmosphere to top 400 ppm, the highest they have been in over 4 million years. The accompanying temperature increase will cause severe weather, unprecedented sea level rise, massive species extinction, and is expected to displace hundreds of millions in this century alone; AND

Whereas: 42% of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions can be traced to the production and disposal of the food and goods people use. This waste directly contributes to the climate crisis; AND

Whereas: Climate scientists agree that reducing the amount of waste through recycling helps conserve space in landfills, reduces the amount of harmful gas emitted, and helps protect natural resources; AND

Whereas: Other institutions have taken steps to reduce waste on campus through improved recycling infrastructure. Harvard University has transformed their recycling program and set a goal of reducing waste per capita 50% by 2020, making sustainability a priority; AND

Whereas: Northeastern University students demonstrated support for waste reduction efforts during the 2015 Student Government Direct Election. 89% of voters supported implementing a 1:1 recycling program and 62% of voters supported a tax on plastic bags at on-campus businesses; AND

Whereas: Despite this, recycling infrastructure has not changed on campus. A survey of waste and recycling bins on campus revealed that in some buildings there are as many as six waste bins for every one recycling bin; AND

Whereas: Plastic bags are still being offered at no cost at on-campus businesses; AND

Whereas: The committee tasked with implementing sustainability efforts has had difficulty implementing change because of a lack of administrative involvement and continuity of representation from students; AND

Whereas: Despite the release of the “Sustainable Action Plan: Roadmap Towards Carbon Neutrality” in 2005, Northeastern University has failed to make significant improvements to recycling infrastructure to some areas of campus since efforts began in 1989 with the introduction of the RENU program; AND
BE IT RESOLVED:
That the Senate reaffirms the Undergraduate Student Body's vote in favor of efforts to reduce waste, and calls upon Northeastern University, in keeping with its commitment to leadership in sustainability, to take steps to address the carbon footprint of the university.

The Senate specifically calls upon the Northeastern University administration to take the following actions regarding environmental sustainability:

1) Institute a campus-wide, uniform, multi-stream, one-to-one style recycling program that clearly illustrates relevant recycling guidelines.
2) Implement a system to reduce plastic bag usage on campus by:
   a) Creating a financial incentive that discourages plastic bag usage at Chartwells contracted on-campus businesses.
   b) Increasing the number of locations where students can acquire reusable shopping bags.

Respectfully submitted to the Senate,

Max Wagner  
Special Interest Senator, Husky Environmental Action Team

Pratik Dubey  
Special Interest Senator, Progressive Student Alliance

Sahil Kadakia  
Senator, D'Amore McKim School of Business

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PASSES on December 5th, 2016 in a vote of 63 in favor, 2 against, and 0 abstentions

ATTEST:

Elliot Horen, Student Body President  
Sukhara Sharma, Executive Vice President