

**STUDENT SENATE BILL 2024-1169**

**TITLE: A Resolution Recognizing the Need for Biodegradable Silverware Alternatives in the Reitz Union**

**AUTHOR(S): Senator Hunter Monson**

**SPONSOR(S):**

**WHEREAS**, a goal of the University of Florida is to be carbon neutral for all currently tracked campus GHG emissions starting in 2025, and the Reitz Union, being one of the most visited places on campus, bears a primary responsibility to promote sustainable initiatives whether that be through limiting nonrenewable energy consumption, waste reduction, composting & recycling initiatives, carbon emissions reduction, land conservation, & stormwater management

[1][2][3][4][5]; and,

**WHEREAS**, as of February 2024, the Reitz Union currently uses plastic silverware and can be swapped with biodegradable alternatives such as those made from bioplastics, bamboo, &/or edible options [6]; and,

**WHEREAS**, some benefits of biodegradable materials is that they are non-toxic, break down naturally in the presence of microbes, & reduce environmental pollution, but they are generally more expensive than plastic cutlery [6]; and,

**WHEREAS**, although biodegradable alternatives are typically more costly, their immense benefits outweigh the higher price due to the fact that plastic silverware comes from nonrenewable resources like petroleum, can take hundreds of years to decompose, contains

hazardous materials, is not compostable, & is a large source of environmental pollution, which contributes to global warming & microplastic accumulation [6][7]; and,

**WHEREAS**, eco-friendly tableware is more energy efficient as well as more sustainable for the environment, which makes reusable plates, cups, &/or utensils are beneficial from a maintenance perspective, too [7]; and,

**WHEREAS**, on top of the University of Florida's sustainability goals, "the City of Gainesville established a goal of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045" [1][8]; and,

**WHEREAS**, students at the University of Florida have experienced "climate anxiety" as well as a growing concern of University of Florida leadership and the negligence of the growing climate crisis [9]; and,

**WHEREAS**, University of Florida President Ben Sasse previously opposed an amendment (in regard to the Keystone Pipeline Approval Act in 2015) where the amendment explicitly stated "climate change is real and not a hoax" as well as publicly condemning "climate alarmists" [10][11]; and,

**WHEREAS**, stated by the University of Florida Office of Sustainability, it is expected that "students will leave UF with knowledge of climate change gained through their coursework in order to be informed global citizens and leaders, equipped for success in the job market, and meaningfully engaged in their communities," demonstrating that students have the right to be informed & educated on climate issues as well as given climate change-related curriculum opportunities [1]; and,

**WHEREAS**, the University of Florida Office of Sustainability proclaims that "improving resilience at UF means bringing the preparation for, adaptation to, and recovery from climate-related impacts to the forefront of campus-wide planning, decision-making, and regional

collaboration, in order to flourish in the face of acute disruption and long-term stressors,” implying that increased awareness on climate issues will promote the advancement for the university [1]; and,

**WHEREAS**, the implementation of the UF Climate Action Plan 2.0 must be done in a timely manner as any further environmental neglect will inevitably result in severe impacts on the university, its surrounding ecosystems, its students, & Gainesville wildlife and ecological habitats; then,

**THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED** that the University of Florida Student Senate recognizes the need for the Reitz Union to look into implementing alternative silverware in order to reduce landfill & promote environmentalism; and,

**THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED** that the University of Florida Student Senate support a transition away from the currently used plastic silverware in the Reitz Union; and,

**THEREFORE, LET IT FINALLY BE RESOLVED** the University of Florida Student Senate commits itself to support any further transitions towards biodegradable silverware alternatives within the University of Florida.

*Proviso: A copy of this resolution shall be sent to University of Florida President Ben Sasse, Senior Director of the Reitz Union Dwayne Isaacs, Director of the Office of Sustainability Matthew Williams, Sustainable Building Coordinator Dustin Stephany, Gators Going Green Agency Head Samantha Simon, Utility Electrical Superintendent Charles Rolling, Assistant Vice President of Facilities Services Mark Helms, Assistant Director of Business Operations Jordan Benton, Recycling and Solid Waste Coordinator Carmen Bruno, Florida Fish and Wildlife*

*Commissioners Rodney Barreto, Steven Hudson, Gary Nicklaus, Preston Farrow, Gary Lester, Sonya Rood, Albert Maury, University of Florida Vice President for Agriculture and Natural Resources, Provost, & Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs J. Scott Angle, Florida Wildlife Federation President & CEO Sarah Gledhill, Florida Wildlife Federation Operations Director Becky Dotson, Florida Wildlife Federation Conservation Policy Director Casey Darling Kniffin, City of Gainesville Citizen Climate Advisory Committee Citizens at Large James C. Fulton, Mary Jennison Kipp Searcy, Adam Despong, Jackie B. Davis, Carly Muir, Danielle L. Cucchiara, & City of Gainesville Chief Climate Officer Dan Zhu.*

[1] <https://sustainable.ufl.edu/campus-initiatives/uf-climate-action/uf-cap-2/>

[2] <https://sustainable.ufl.edu/campus-initiatives/uf-climate-action/>

[3] <https://sustainable.ufl.edu/campus-initiatives/uf-climate-action/>

[4] <https://sustainable.ufl.edu/campus-initiatives/waste/>

[5] <https://sustainable.ufl.edu/campus-initiatives/water/>

[6] <https://medium.com/@kimecopak/biodegradable-cutlery-and-its-advantages-to-the-environment-and-food-business-22d5cb5b0cb5>

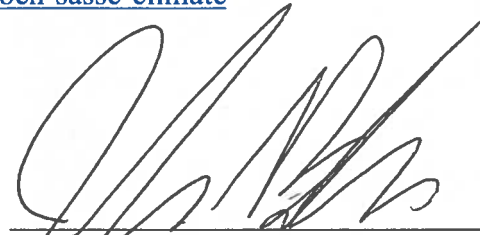
[7] <https://www.pickonus.com/blogs/default-blog/8-benefits-of-eco-friendly-dinnerware-and-3-reasons-it-matters>

[8] <https://www.gainesvillefl.gov/Government-Pages/Government/Departments/Climate-Action#:~:text=The%20City%20of%20Gainesville%20established,for%20drafting%20the%20action%20plan.>

[9] <https://health.wusf.usf.edu/health-news-florida/2023-04-21/uf-students-face-environmental-anxiety-as-threat-of-climate-change-looms>

[10] <https://www.congress.gov/amendment/114th-congress/senate-amendment/58/text>

[11] <https://www.alligator.org/article/2022/10/ben-sasse-climate>



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John Brinkman  
Senate President

3/1/2024  
Date