

Homework 4

Plastics in a Circular Economy

This week we looked into regulation and litigation of plastics waste to create a circular economy.

- a) Summarize what is being done at the Federal level in the US. (One paragraph.)
- b) How could *existing* Federal regulations be enforced if there were a political will driven by public outcry (8 in 10 in the US support reduction in plastics waste). (Few paragraphs)
- c) Go to the website for tort law, take the virtual tour and find a video of a case that could pertain to plastics waste. (<https://www.tortmuseum.org>) Give a two or three sentence summary and a one or two sentence explanation of how it could be applied to plastics waste. Remember that you must have “standing” to file a lawsuit, that is you need to demonstrate that you yourself are directly adversely impacted in a significant way by the problem you are addressing. You can also look at some of the recent litigations on the plastics litigation tracker (<https://plasticslitigationtracker.org/page/2>) and find one that you can summarize.
- d) Compare the state regulations in California with the recently enacted plastics waste law enacted in Indiana which supports “advanced” recycling (aka pyrolysis of plastic to fuel). Give your opinion on which approach is better from an energy balance, economic balance, and environmental balance perspective. Do these two approaches aim to yield a “circular” solution to the plastics waste problem? Why was it so difficult to reach a regulation in California (only after a ballot initiative was certain to win) yet very easy to pass a recycling law in Indiana?
- e) Compare plastics recycling legislation in China, EU, and Africa. Why did China ban the import of plastics waste from the US and EU in the 1990s? List the US, EU, China and Africa in order of most advanced circular plastics economies in your opinion. Give a brief reasoning for this order.