

2023 Environmental Priority Washington Recycling & Packaging Act



Problem

Worldwide, we produce almost 400 million tons of plastic waste annually—and nearly half of all plastic produced is intended to be used just once and thrown away. Washingtonians experience this problem first-hand with plastic and other materials littering our neighborhoods, shorelines, and parks, filling landfills to capacity, and harming wildlife. And it doesn't stop with plastics, we are inundated with excess packaging, especially single-use items.

Washington's recycling systems have not been able to keep up with the influx of plastic and paper packaging flooding into our homes and environment:

- In Washington, more than 50% of all consumer packaging and paper products are landfilled or incinerated, wasting an estimated \$104 million in valuable materials.
- Only 17% of plastic packaging waste is actually recycled.
- Washingtonian's recycling service bills have increased up to 30% over the past five years.
- Recycling access varies across the state and many Washington residents must pay extra for recycling services. Residents in 11 counties have no access to curbside recycling services at all.

Contact

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Solution

We can address the growing amount of unnecessary and non-recyclable packaging by making producers—the companies that actually make packaging decisions—financially responsible for the end-of-life costs of these materials, rather than these costs falling on Washington residents.

This will put in place incentives for companies to reduce packaging and instead use packaging that is reusable, compostable, or actually recyclable.

Producer responsibility works

Globally, companies have been complying with producer responsibility programs since the 1990s, with great results. In the last two years, California, Colorado, Maine, and Oregon have passed producer responsibility programs for packaging and more states are considering putting their own programs in place.

Washingtonians win with the WRAP Act

The Washington Recycling and Packaging Act will:

- **Incentivize producers to use reusable, recyclable, or compostable packaging.**
- **Reduce pollution causing climate change:** Higher use of recycled content in packaging materials means fewer emissions and less energy use compared to producing virgin paper, plastic, metal, and glass packaging.
- **Provide free, universal recycling services for Washingtonians:** All residents who currently have curbside garbage pickup will receive curbside recycling service.
- **Reduce confusion and contamination** by developing a clear common list of what can be recycled statewide and ensuring that product labels reflect actual recyclability in WA.
- **Significantly increase recycling rates for beverage containers by establishing a deposit return system.**
- **Support Washington's economy** by building local supply chains and recycling businesses and creating new, green jobs.

