

2019 Legislative Action Day

The Collapse of California Recycling Markets:

For decades, California sold the vast majority of its recyclable materials to China. In 2017, however, China banned the importing of certain recyclables, including postconsumer mixed plastics, unsorted mixed paper, textiles, and more through the adoption of its “National Sword” policy. Subsequently in 2018, China adopted the “Blue Sky” policy that imposes tougher import contamination standards, as well as stringent inspection and enforcement measures for the recyclable materials they continue to import. Additionally, in late 2018, China announced its intent to ban all imports of recyclable materials by 2020. The combination of these policies has collapsed the recyclable materials market in California.

Legislative Context:

The Legislature is beginning to grapple with the existential threat to California’s recycling programs by introducing several bills to address various aspects of this issue. Many legislators, however, are still not fully aware of this issue. Make sure you discuss your city’s challenges with recycling and solid waste programs and illustrate how these issues are impacting your community. Many of the recycling and solid waste bills are still under development as they move through the legislative process, so expect more information on these bills to develop as the session goes on.

Bills of Interest:

- **SB 54 (Allen) & AB 1080 (Gonzalez)**, California Circular Economy and Plastic Pollution Reduction Act. **(Pending Support)**
These identical bills require manufacturers to source reduce 75% of single use plastic packaging and products sold in California by 2030, and require all single use plastics and packaging sold in the state recyclable or compostable by 2030. They also require CalRecycle to develop a scoping plan to achieve this goal, including consulting with stakeholders. The League’s Environmental Quality policy committee recommended a support position, which is now pending League Board approval.
- **SB 667 (Hueso)** Greenhouse Gases: Recycling Infrastructure and Facilities. **(Support)**
Requires CalRecycle to do several things, including: 1) develop, on or before January 1, 2021, a five-year investment strategy to drive innovation, 2) support technological development and infrastructure, in order to meet the state’s 2025 organic waste reduction target, and 3) identify priorities and strategies for financial incentive mechanisms.
- **AB 1583 (Eggman)** The California Recycling Market Development Act. **(Watch)**
Creates the California Recycling Market Development Act which would: 1) establish a paper recycling incentive program that makes incentive payments to in-state processors of waste paper, 2) establish an organic waste recycling incentive program that makes incentive payments to in-state organic waste recycling facilities that process organic waste collected from municipal sources, and 3) require CalRecycle to, by July 1, 2020, convene a Statewide Commission on Recycling Markets and Curbside Recycling consisting of representatives of public agencies, private solid waste enterprises, and environmental organizations to identify products that are recyclable and compostable. This bill is still being developed, and the League will monitor the bill as it moves forward.

SB 1383 (Lara, 2016) Regulations – Organic Waste Diversion Mandates:

In September 2016, Governor Brown signed SB 1383 (Lara, Chapter 395, Statutes of 2016), establishing methane emissions reduction targets in a statewide effort to reduce emissions of short-lived climate pollutants. SB 1383 establishes 50% reduction targets from the 2014 level by 2020, and a 75% reduction by 2025, to remove organic waste methane emissions into the atmosphere. To meet these statewide targets, local governments will need to dramatically change the way they collect and haul organic waste. CalRecycle issued proposed regulations in January 2019 that place new heavy regulations on local government on how to comply, with no associated state funding to implement these targets.

Budget Ask:

The League, along with a large group of local government, environmental, and industry members have asked for \$100 million from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund for CalRecycle to fund organic waste infrastructure. California lacks the organic waste infrastructure to appropriately handle the SB 1383 mandates. The state must provide funding to help build this infrastructure or locals will face the possibility of failing to meet the statewide targets.

Action: Urge your legislators to support budget funding to build organic waste infrastructure which is critical to have any chance of meeting the ambitious statewide organic waste reduction mandates.