

2023 Issue Paper: Solid Waste Management

Background and League priorities

We all know the waste diversion mantra—reduce, reuse, recycle. Much has changed over the last 40 years as to technologies and characteristics of the solid waste we all produce. Disposal and diversion methods have changed as well. While managing solid waste is a smaller percentage of the contributions to climate change impacts, there are so many actions that citizens can take individually. But it's not just about individual responsibility, but also getting companies to take responsibility for the waste their products create. Incentivizing plastic waste reduction and better recycling outcomes will lead to creating a circular economy to divert waste from disposal.

The League of Women Voters has long-held positions in the Solid Waste Management area. Both LWVUS and LWVWA (1971 and 1972) adopted significant position to manage solid and household hazardous waste. LWVUS published resources: *The Garbage Primer* (1992), *Recycling is More Than Collections* (1992), and *Plastic Waste Primer* (1993). Much has changed as we have moved into this 21st Century. We need more tools and methods for managing our solid waste.

Legislative Outlook for 2023

Legislation on [extended producer responsibility](#) (EPR), recycling, and waste reduction will resurface in the 2023 session as The WRAP Act – Washington Recycling and Packaging Act. This comprehensive bill is being championed by Sen. Christine Rolfes (D-23) and Rep. Liz Berry (D-36). EPR is already happening in many places around the world, and in the last two years, four states (Maine, Oregon, California, Colorado) have passed similar bills. Washington could become the 5th state to enact—just like Washington was on women's suffrage! Bill supporters estimate that enacting The WRAP Act will put \$104 million back into our economy on an annual basis by saving resources, improving recycling, and reducing environmental impacts.

Look too for bills to reappear on battery recycling, and the right to repair extension.

A three-pronged bill will take a run at reducing plastics in our environment by:

- implementing a ban all Styrofoam docks (includes those that are wrapped in a vinyl that deteriorates over time).
- Requiring that water fountains in new construction have the bottle refill option.
- Requiring hotels to install bulk soap/shampoo dispensers.

Recent Legislative Progress in Washington State

In the 2022 session LWVWA began giving more attention to Solid Waste Management bills in the Washington legislature. LWVWA supported the comprehensive RENEW Act on extended producer responsibility and recycling which was not enacted. LWVWA supported two successful bills concerning the disposal of organics. Landfills are a significant source of methane which is more potent than CO₂ in the near term. The EPA estimates that 15.1% of methane emitted in the U.S. in 2019 was from [landfills](#).

- **Reducing organic material to landfill (HB 1799 / SB 5731)** This bill establishes a statewide goal for the landfill disposal of organic materials at a level representing 75% reduction by 2030, relative to 2015, and a goal of 20% reduction in volume of edible food disposed (relative to 2015) to be recovered for human consumption by 2025. Some local governments will be

required to begin providing separated organic material collection services, requiring local governments to consider state organic material management goals/requirements in their local solid waste plans, requiring some businesses to **not** landfill their organic wastes, reducing legal liability risk barriers to the donation of edible food, establishing the Washington Center for Sustainable Food Management, establishing various new funding and financial incentives, facilitating the siting of organic material management facilities, requiring local governments to procure more compost and finished products, and improving standards related to the labeling of plastic and compostable products in order to reduce contamination of the waste.

- **Landfill methane gas (HB 1663)**: HB 1663 bill will reduce methane emissions in Washington by requiring owners or operators of certain landfills to install methane gas capture systems and to collect gas at an extraction rate that complies with surface methane emission limits (set in statute).

2020 Reusable Bag Bill (2SHB 1205/ESSB 5323): Relating to reducing pollution from plastic bags by establishing minimum state standards for the use of carryout bags at retail establishments: During the 2020 legislative session, the Legislature passed a [statewide ban on single use plastic bags](#), an effort to reduce plastic pollution, litter, and waste. The ban on single-use plastic bags began Oct. 1, 2021, after a 9-month delay due to the COVID-19 emergency.

Compost use (ESHB 2713): to help restore soil health and to help reduce food waste

Revise recycling and reduce plastic pollution bill (HB 1118/SSB 5022) Concerning the management of certain materials to support recycling and waste and litter reduction: includes product stewardship for packaging and printed paper and other sections to implement the top recommendations in Ecology's Plastics Study (October 2020): Recycled content for beverage containers, plastic trash bags and jugs/bottles; Ban expanded polystyrene (aka Styrofoam) food service products, coolers and packing materials (peanuts); Optional service ware. Requires utensils, straws, beverage cup lids and condiment packages be offered on request.

2019 Plastic Package Stewardship (HB 1204/E2SSB 5397): A study bill that creates data report that could lead to legislation that would improve our recycling system.

Food waste (E2SHB 1114): Established a goal to reduce, by 50%, the amount of wasted food generated annually by 2030, relative to 2017 levels.

Compostability labeling (ESHB 1569): Authorized the state's attorney general and local governments to pursue false or misleading environmental claims and "greenwashing" for plastic products claiming to be "compostable" or "biodegradable" when in fact they are not

Sustainable Recycling (2SHB 1543/SSB 5545): Create a recycling development center

Paint Stewardship (SHB 1652): Require stewardship of discarded latex and oil-based paint (and it is being implemented).

Alternative to cremation (SHB 1162/ ESSB 5001)– Concerning human remains): Allows Alkaline hydrolysis or hydrolysis means the reduction of human remains.

For more information:

- Environmental Priorities Coalition <https://wecprotects.org/our-work/areas-of-work/environmental-priorities-coalition/>
- <http://plasticfreewashington.org/>
Producer Responsibility 101: <http://plasticfreewashington.org/solutions/producer-responsibility-101/>
- <https://zerowastewashington.org/legislative-work/>