

News

CALAVERAS JOINS FIGHT OVER WASTE COSTS

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SAN ANDREAS - Calaveras County joined dozens of other California counties and cities Tuesday in a crusade to get escalating landfill and waste-disposal costs off the backs of taxpayers and onto the backs of the producers and consumers.

The county is taking aim at products ranging from computers to refrigerators to paint.

"It seems appropriate that the people purchasing the product would pay the cost of disposal rather than the community at large," said Calaveras County Director of Public Works Tom Garcia, who oversees the county's landfill and garbage-transfer stations.

The Calaveras County Board of Supervisors voted 4-1 to endorse a resolution by the California Product Stewardship Council that calls for state lawmakers to pass laws making producers responsible for disposing or recycling their products.

Supervisor Gary Tofanelli was opposed. Tofanelli said that the product council brochure featured an image of a plastic water bottle, but that there is already a state program that mandates deposits to ensure recycling of water bottles.

"Is that double taxation?" Tofanelli asked.

Tofanelli's colleagues on the board, however, see such a law as the opposite of taxation. Instead, it is the present system of sticking local government with the cost of disposing consumer products that imposes unnecessary costs, Supervisor Steve Wilensky said.

"The taxpayers are picking up the bill," Wilensky said.

Supervisor Tom Tryon earlier expressed concern that a producer responsibility law would impose inappropriate costs on businesses.

Tryon said he now supports the measure in part because the Regional Council of Rural Counties has come out in favor of it.

About 50 county and city governments in California have already adopted a resolution urging state legislators to adopt product stewardship laws. Such laws already exist in Japan and many European nations.

Generally, product stewardship laws have the effect of forcing producers and consumers to pay the cost of disposal up front. Producers often hire specialized disposal and recycling services to handle the actual end-of-product-life work.

Advocates of producer responsibility and some industry representatives say the laws also serve as an incentive for producers to design their products in ways that make recycling more efficient and reduce waste. Such design changes, in turn, reduce producer costs.

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