

# California State Legislature Supports a Transition to Refillable, One-Pound Propane Cylinders

 [wasteadvantagemag.com/california-state-legislature-supports-a-transition-to-refillable-one-pound-propane-cylinders](https://wasteadvantagemag.com/california-state-legislature-supports-a-transition-to-refillable-one-pound-propane-cylinders)

September 11, 2024



State Senator John Laird's (D-Santa Cruz) bill to transition California away from single-use, one-pound propane cylinders to refillable canisters that are safer for consumers and better for the environment is now headed to Governor Newsom for signature. When signed by Governor Newsom, it will make it easier for campers to leave no trace and help California meet its climate goals.

SB 1280 gives the makers of the single-use cylinders almost four years to transition to refillable cylinders. The one-pound propane cylinders are often used in lanterns, cooking stoves, and other outdoor devices. It is estimated that more than 7 million are sold annually in California. They pose multiple problems and safety concerns for local government hazardous waste and recycling operations.

"Our beaches and our parks are often littered with these disposable canisters," said Senator Laird, Member of the Natural Resources & Water Committee. "A small percentage are properly disposed of at household hazardous waste sites, but millions end up in our landfills. They are expensive for cities and counties to collect. California should move away from

these single-use products and transition to refillable cylinders. SB 1280 can reduce pollution, cut the amount going into our landfills, and improve safety for workers who must handle these cylinders.”

Local government solid waste and recycling operations are responsible for the collection, processing, recycling, and disposal of various forms of waste. Local agencies and their contractors – funded by local ratepayers – are responsible for managing residential and commercial waste streams. Those waste streams include many items, some of which are easily and affordably managed and some of which are not. One consumer product that has been a longtime concern is the single-use 1 lb. propane cylinders typically used in lanterns, cooking stoves, and other outdoor devices. It is estimated that between 40-60 million of these single-use 1 lb. propane cylinders are sold in the United States every year. California accounts for roughly 12% of the population of the United States, so we can safely estimate more than 7 million single-use 1 lb. propane cylinders are sold in California each year. However, the California Product Stewardship Council (CPSC) estimates that less than 15% of the single-use cylinders are safely recycled through the Household Hazardous Waste programs offered by local governments, with the remaining cylinders ending up in landfills throughout the state.

Local, state, and national parks have long struggled with the impacts of improperly disposed single-use 1 lb. propane cylinders. A 2019 article from Waste 360 reported that the Yosemite National Park collects between 20,000 and 25,000 tanks a year and trucks them more than two hours away to a facility that processes low-grade hazardous waste. With a statewide average disposal cost of \$5.00 each, Yosemite spends at least \$75,000/year on this problematic product, not including collection and transportation costs. The costs of properly disposing of unwanted cylinders continue to climb each year, with some jurisdictions paying upwards of \$65.00 each. One of Yosemite’s sustainability initiatives is focused on reducing improper disposal of propane tanks by promoting use of refillable tanks. As a result, the only cylinders available for purchase inside of Yosemite are refillable.

As noted earlier, SB 1280 would prohibit the sale of the “camping style” disposable 1lb. propane cylinders in California beginning January 1, 2028. This system will operate much like existing exchange and refilling infrastructure that exists in California already (see <https://www.refuelyourfun.org/>). A robust refilling and exchange infrastructure has existed for many decades for the 20 lb. (5 gal.) “barbeque style” propane tanks, as there has never been a single-use option for that size cylinder until the last decade. California now boasts the largest network of any state in the nation for both refill locations and exchange

locations. We've seen the number of cylinder refillers and exchange locations expand greatly since 2022 despite the supply chain issues associated with the pandemic. This statewide network now includes nearly 500 locations across California, that either refill or exchange, and that number continues to expand year-over-year. Prohibiting the sale of disposable propane tanks will move residents to a more sustainable and safe option that leverages this robust and fast-growing network of refillers and exchange locations.

In addition to CPSC's sponsorship, SB 1280 is supported by a large coalition that includes California State Association of Counties, CalCities, Rural County Representatives of California, StopWaste, SWANA Legislative Task Force, Republic Services, ReGen Monterey, Rethink Waste, Californians Against Waste, Zero Waste Sonoma, WM, Circular Polymers, Sunnyvale, California Waste and Recycling Association, Recycling and Waste Reduction Commission of Santa Clara County, among many others.

***For more information, visit [www.calpsc.org](http://www.calpsc.org).***