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Recycling-related bills greenlit in California

Gov. Gavin Newsom has signed legislation regarding plastic bag use, textile and paint EPR, among others, but vetoed an EV battery EPR bill.



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As September drew to a close, California Gov. Gavin Newsom signed a number of recycling-related bills into law and vetoed another that would have created an extended producer responsibility (EPR) program for electric vehicle (EV) batteries.

Updated plastic bag ban

Newsom recently signed Senate Bill 1053, which will ban the distribution of single-use plastic bags in the state's grocery store checkout lines starting in 2026. Authored by state Sen. Catherine Blakespear, [SB 1053](#) was crafted to "close a loophole" in existing legislation, enacted 10 years ago, that allows stores to sell customers thicker plastic carryout bags that were considered reusable and met certain recyclability standards.

However, Blakespear notes that bags covered by the decade-old legislation rarely are reused or recycled and end up in landfills or the environment.

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"The reality is that the thicker bags are difficult to recycle—and few are ever recycled—and they are seldom reused," Blakespear says in a news release. "Instead, they have contributed to California's growing plastic waste."

Blakespear cites [Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery](#) (CalRecycle) research claiming the amount of grocery and merchandise bags disposed by Californians grew from 157,385 tons of plastic bags in 2016 to 231,072 tons by 2022. "A plastic bag has an average lifespan of 12 minutes and then it is discarded, afflicting our environment with toxic microplastics that fester in our oceans and landfills for up to 1,000 years," she adds.

Under SB 1053, grocery stores may offer recycled paper bags at checkout, or consumers can use their own bags to carry out their purchases. Blakespear notes the legislation does not restrict the sale of any type of bag, rather it provides that only paper bags can be available at the point of sale.

The legislation initially was supported by state Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan, who authored an identical bill, [AB 2236](#), that was pushed through the assembly to help build momentum for the policy. Both bills were supported by more than 200 different organizations, including Californians Against Waste, the California Grocers Association, Ocean Conservancy and Oceana before SB 1053 ultimately reached Newsom's desk.

The [Responsible Recycling Alliance](#) (RRA), a coalition of three prominent California-based recyclers and manufacturers in [EFS Plastics](#), [Merlin Plastics](#) and [PreZero US](#), formed in June and has opposed the legislation.

[In an August interview posted to the RRA's website](#), coalition spokesperson and PreZero US Vice President of Public Affairs Roxanne Spiekerman says the twin bills are not the answer.

"The better way forward is for our elected representatives to heed the need of Californians, work with consumers, grocers, as well as

a step back and recognize that we need to work together to develop and enact an overall solution that protects the environment, grocers and consumers at the same time. It can be done. We at the RRA are eager to be a part of this solution.”

Textile EPR on the way

As the Sept. 30 signing deadline drew near, Newsom signed into law the Responsible Textile Recovery Act of 2024, or [SB 707](#). The act establishes an EPR program for the collection and recycling of apparel or other textile articles deemed unsuitable for reuse by consumers in their current condition.

The bill, first authored by Sen. Josh Newman in 2023, is considered the U.S.’ first EPR textile recycling program. Under its provisions, the law requires producers and other participants in the textile value chain to take responsibility for the entire life cycle of their products, including repair, recycling and reuse of garments and fibers. Once implemented, Newman says SB 707 will not only reduce the number of textiles sent to landfills, but also will support the development of upcycling and recycling across the state and help address the environmental impacts of “fast fashion” and the “throwaway culture it has abetted.”

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“I’m very proud to see SB 707 signed into law,” Newman says. “It will have a major positive impact on California’s environment and communities. SB 707 isn’t just about recycling; it’s about transforming the way we think about textile waste.

“The framework created by SB 707 will create new opportunities for every Californian to participate in a more sustainable future,” he continues. “By 2030, convenient drop-off locations for used textiles across the state will provide everyone with a free and simple way to be part of the solution. California is again at the forefront of innovation, proving we can lead the way in creating a circular and sustainable textile economy that benefits everyone.”

According to Newman, the fashion industry has accounted for approximately 10 percent of global carbon emissions, and in 2021, approximately 1.2 million tons of textiles were disposed of in California. Despite 95 percent of textiles being reusable or recyclable, only 15 percent currently are recycled or reused.

Since its introduction last year, the bill has received extensive stakeholder engagement, Newman says. The process resulted in dozens of alterations aided by environmental organizations, textile industry leaders and community groups. The bill has received support from organizations such as the [California Product Stewardship Council](#) (CPSC), retailers [Ikea](#) and [Goodwill](#) and hauler [Republic Services Inc.](#), as well as from local governments, agencies and sanitation districts.

“At Ikea, we have an ambition to become a circular business by 2030,” says Mardi Ditze, Ikea U.S. sustainability manager. “To achieve this, we must partner with policymakers to support efforts in creating more circular systems for textiles and other products. We applaud Senator Newman for leading a collaborative process with industry stakeholders on SB 707 and support efforts to increase textile circularity in California and across the U.S.”



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The bill requires CalRecycle to adopt regulations governing the program, and beginning Jan. 1, 2032, will need to reassess the adopted regulations to include adjusting the minimum required collection sites, establishing a minimum recycling efficiency rate for covered products collected and recycled by program operators and establish other program criteria.

Additionally, the bill establishes the Textile Stewardship Recovery Fund in the state treasury for the deposit of all money received from program operators and would make funds available to CalRecycle for program purposes. CalRecycle will be able to impose fines for a violation of the program’s requirements, not to exceed \$10,000 per day, or not to exceed \$50,000 per day for an intentional, knowing or reckless violation.

products managed under its paint recycling program, managed by nonprofit organization PaintCare.

PaintCare, which has been active in California since 2012, represents paint companies and organizes stewardship programs for leftover architectural coatings in states with stewardship laws. Its program provides a network of nearly 800 drop-off sites that include paint retailers, local government-run waste collection facilities, recycling centers and more, where households and businesses can take their leftover paint.

RELATED: [PaintCare celebrates 10 years of paint recycling in California](#)

PaintCare partners with scrap processors to ensure collected paint is reused as-is, recycled into new paint or put to another use, and has managed 55 million gallons of leftover architectural paint to date. With the passage of [SB 1143](#), the program's covered products will be expanded to include additional nonindustrial coatings and coating-related products, as well as aerosol coatings, by 2028.

"We're looking forward to making PaintCare a more universal stewardship program for California consumers," PaintCare President Marjaneh Zarrehparvar says. "With over a decade of success operating the state's architectural coatings program, we have a strong foundation and the right partners to manage nearly all leftover paint products in the state."

No signature for EV bill

An EPR bill requiring that all EV batteries in the state be reused, repaired, repurposed or remanufactured and eventually recycled at their end-of-life under was sent back to the state's senate Sept. 29 without Newsom's signature.

[Under SB 615](#), introduced by Sens. Ben Allen and Dave Min, the [Department of Toxic Substances Control](#) (DTSC) would be responsible for adopting regulations to implement and enforce the bill's requirements, and for establishing a method for EV battery suppliers, secondary users and handlers and qualified facilities to report EV battery transactions.

The bill also would impose fines of up to \$50,000 per day for battery suppliers who don't comply with its rules, and up to \$100,000 per day if the violation is deemed intentional. Had the bill passed, the DTSC would have needed to adopt the bill's regulations by July 1, 2028.

"I agree with the intent of this bill and the need to responsibly manufacture, recycle and reuse EV batteries," [Newsom says in a statement announcing his veto](#). "As California continues to lead the revolution toward a zero-emission transportation future, with a requirement that all new vehicles sold in the state be zero-emission by 2035, responsibly tracking the sale, use and reuse of these vehicle batteries will be critical. Effective EV battery stewardship also presents an exciting opportunity to develop new innovative industries that use repurposed or recycled batteries."

Newsome notes that the state has successfully implemented many reuse and recycling systems that reduce waste and create jobs but says SB 615 would place a significant burden on the DTSC to implement the policy instead of building on the success of existing EPR models.

"I encourage the author to continue working with stakeholders to explore if a producer responsibility organization would yield more equilibrium among public agencies and industry in sharing the administrative burden required by this policy," Newsom says.

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