



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 18, 2013

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Maine Lawmakers Pass Bill to Create Paint Recycling Program

Has Broad Support from Paint Industry, Towns, Environmental Groups, and Retail Stores

(Augusta, ME)—With strong bi-partisan support, the Maine Legislature today enacted a bill to create an industry-run collection and recycling program for leftover household paint. If allowed to become law by Governor Paul LePage, the bill (LD 1308) would save money for towns and taxpayers through a product stewardship program that would provide convenient used paint collection sites at participating paint retail stores and transfer stations across Maine. The bill received a 28-7 vote in the Senate, and a 92-44 vote in the House. Governor LePage has 10 days to sign the bill, allow the bill to become law without his signature, or veto the bill.

The bill would save money for Maine towns by avoiding the high costs of processing used paint that currently is collected, sporadically across the state, through household hazardous waste events. Industry data on Maine paint sales suggest the program could result in the collection and environmentally-responsible recycling and reuse of more than 300,000 gallons of paint annually in Maine. Maine would be the seventh state to enact this program, following Oregon, California, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Minnesota, and Vermont.

“Creating this program to recycle leftover paint will be good for Maine people, municipalities, and our environment. It will build on Maine’s other successful product stewardship programs, which are helping keep toxic materials out of landfills and incinerators,” says Abby King, Toxics Policy Advocate for the Natural Resources Council of Maine. “We are pleased to have worked closely with representatives of the paint industry and a bipartisan group of lawmakers to shape this legislation that will provide a solution for the unwanted used paint piling up in basements and closets across the state.”

The bill, introduced by Sen. Tom Saviello (R-Franklin), received support during public hearings from the American Coatings Association; paint companies such as Sherwin-Williams, Behr, Velspar, and Henry; the Maine Resource Recovery Association, which represents 235 towns; retail stores; and organizations that promote product stewardship programs, including the Natural Resources Council of Maine and Product Stewardship Institute (PSI). LD 1308 would create a state-wide program to collect and recycle leftover latex and oil paint, with participating retail stores serving as the primary locations to recycle the paint.

Small local retailers, in particular, support the program because it provides increased customer traffic and allows them to provide a valuable service to their customers, who are now able to safely and responsibly remove leftover paint cans that have been piling up in their basements and garages.

LD 1308 uses the “product stewardship” model of assigning the responsibility of collection, recycling and disposal of used products to the manufacturers. The program adds a recycling fee to the price of the product to finance the program; ensures a level playing field among all manufacturers; and involves industry management of the program through voluntary public and private sector collection sites. This model was developed through years of collaboration among multiple stakeholders in a national effort facilitated by PSI.

“Thanks to the leadership of the paint industry and the perseverance of other stakeholders, Maine is taking a big step toward creating a paint stewardship law that, once implemented, will have a huge pay off,” says Scott Cassel, chief executive officer of PSI. “Maine will benefit from millions of dollars of savings each year for its local governments, increased environmental benefits, and additional environmental jobs.”

“This program is a proven success,” said NRCM’s Abby King. “In its first year of operation in Oregon, the program collected 470,000 gallons of paint, 47 tons of plastic paint containers, and 65 tons of metal paint cans, and it saved the Portland Oregon Metro regional government more than \$1 million in avoided costs.”

Although the Maine Department of Environmental Protection testified in opposition to the bill when it was considered at public hearing, the DEP recommended a number of amendments during work session which were incorporated into the legislation. “We urge the governor to sign this bill into law so that Maine people, towns, and independent paint retail stores will receive the many benefits that this program has to offer, including reducing the volume of paint and paint containers that end up in our landfills and the environment.”

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About the Natural Resources Council of Maine

The Natural Resources Council of Maine is the leading nonprofit membership organization working statewide for clean air and water; healthy people, wildlife and forests; and clean energy solutions. NRCM harnesses the power of science, the law, and the voices of more than 12,000 supporters to protect the nature of Maine. Visit NRCM online at www.nrcm.org.

About the Product Stewardship Institute (PSI)

The Product Stewardship Institute (PSI) is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to reducing the health and environmental impacts of consumer products. Founded in 2000, PSI brings together key stakeholders with varying interests to develop product end-of-life solutions in a collaborative manner, with a focus on having manufacturers assume primary financial and managerial responsibility. With a robust membership base of 47 state governments and over 230 local governments, as well as partnerships with more than 95 companies, organizations, universities, and non-U.S. governments, PSI advances both voluntary programs and legislation to promote industry-led product stewardship initiatives. For more information, visit PSI online

at www.productstewardship.us. You can also follow PSI on Twitter at twitter.com/ProductSteward and on Facebook at facebook.com/ProductStewardship.