

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Proposal for Packaging Hits the National Stage - Waste Advantage Magazine

Today, U.S. Senator Tom Udall (D-N.M.) and U.S. Representative Alan Lowenthal (D-Calif.) released an outline of legislation to address single-use plastics and packaging that would hold producers and consumers responsible for the waste they produce. The draft proposal marks the first time in three decades that EPR for packaging has been proposed at the federal level and underscores the dire nature of the current recycling and plastics pollution crisis, which Sen. Udall described as “past the tipping point.”

PSI assisted staff for Sen. Udall and Rep. Lowenthal to strengthen the EPR provision in the initial draft proposal and shared best practices on policy approaches for single-use plastics. This fall, the legislators plan to introduce a federal bill. PSI staff will coordinate PSI member and partner input to refine the draft proposal and gain support for a bill. Sen. Udall and Rep. Lowenthal are seeking input from stakeholders by August 21.

The current draft proposal includes EPR for packaging as part of a comprehensive solution that also includes a nationwide container deposit requirement, ban on certain single-use plastic products, carryout bag fee, and standardized labeling for recycling and disposal. It also contains specific obligations that would shift the “large and growing financial burden of cleaning up plastic pollution from state and local governments to the companies that manufacture and sell the products.” The proposal would also protect local governments by penalizing states that prohibit local authorities from enacting plastic reduction policies.

Every day, about 65 dump trucks worth of plastic waste from the U.S. pollutes the ocean. Countries around the world have already taken action on plastic waste. “It is past time for the U.S. to do the same,” said Rep. Lowenthal. Despite recent studies reporting that Americans consume and inhale more than 70,000 microplastic particles each year, plastic production is expected to double by 2030.

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