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New Oregon law requires drug companies pay and run drug take-back program

By Destiny Alvarez The Register-Guard

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Oregon now requires drug manufacturers to pay for and run a statewide drug take-back program, according to a new law that was signed by Gov. Kate Brown this week.

The law allows Oregon residents to take unused drugs back to a pharmacy for safe, environmentally responsible disposal. Prepaid mail-back envelopes also will be available.

The law takes effect in September and the program must be operational by July 1, 2021.

Oregon is the sixth state to require manufacturers to fund and safely manage drug take-back, preceded by Massachusetts, Vermont, Washington, New York, and California.

The law was sponsored by Rep. Sheri Schouten who led a coalition including the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, the League of Oregon Cities, and the Association of Oregon Counties to create legislation that would remove unused drugs from circulation.

“Unused medications are a threat to our state’s health and environment,” said Schouten in an Oregon Department of Environmental Quality news release.

The coalition focused on efforts made by the Product Stewardship Institute, a national nonprofit, that has paved the way for the passage of drug take-back laws around the country over the last 15 years and changed the federal Controlled Substances Act and Drug Enforcement Administration regulations to allow convenient pharmacy collections.

“This new law is a major victory for consumers. It is a critical strike against the

prescription opioid crisis and will go a long way to protect our water quality,” said Scott Cassel, Chief Executive Officer and Founder of PSI in a news release. “It will remove a substantial financial and management burden from governments and taxpayers, placing the primary responsibility with the drug companies that put these products on the market and profit from them.”

Unused medications pose many dangers that can lead to drug abuse, misuse and accidental poisonings especially when it comes to children, pets and the elderly. Disposing of unused medications becomes difficult because they can't be thrown in the trash or down the drain as they could leak into waterways and harm wildlife.