

EPR FOR PACKAGING & PAPER PRODUCTS

A statewide Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) law and policy designed to benefit residents and the environment in Illinois by providing greater access to recycling and a statewide education program.

HOW DOES IT BENEFIT ILLINOIS?

Many Illinoisans lack access to recycling services and recycling rates are some of the lowest in the nation: 9% in Chicago, as compared to the national average of 34.7%. At no cost to Illinois taxpayers, the packaging EPR bill, if enacted, will provide every resident, both in single and multi-family households, with free and convenient access to recycling. It also expands recycling to public and private schools (K-12), public spaces and local government, and provides significant funding to focus on packaging waste reduction and reuse, and enhancing the infrastructure for compostable packaging.

WHAT ARE THE ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS?

Diverting waste from landfills to be reused and recycled reduces greenhouse gas emissions; manufacturing products with recycled materials demands fewer resources. The legislation also includes Post-Consumer Recycled (PCR) content targets for plastic packaging, which will stimulate markets for recycled plastic feedstock and promote a circular economy.

WHY DOES BUSINESS NEED IT?

Global disruptions have left businesses struggling to source the materials needed to manufacture new products. EPR builds resilient supply chains that support businesses.

IS IT USED IN OTHER PLACES?

Packaging EPR programs have been operational in 40 countries and provinces for over three decades – including in Europe and Canada, where recycling rates are as high as 90% in British Columbia. Since 2020, packaging EPR laws have been enacted in Maine, Oregon, Colorado, and California.

WHAT'S COVERED?

Plastic bottles and containers, film plastics, aluminum and metal cans, glass bottles, cardboard, and printed paper are among those materials covered, essentially the same materials currently collected in curbside and drop-off recycling programs. It is very important from an economic standpoint to recycle instead of landfill; recycling creates nine times as many jobs as landfilling.

WHEN WILL IT START?

The program will be developed over several years: If the law is enacted in 2023, it will be implemented in July 2026.

WHO WILL BENEFIT?

Entities currently paying for recycling services will benefit from having the cost of managing packaging and paper products placed where it belongs – on the producers of those products. Consumers will benefit by having more easily recyclable packaging (as producers shift their packaging to more easily recycled materials) and better education on proper recycling. Finally, waste hauling and recycling businesses will benefit from a significant expansion of collection programs and recyclable material collected in Illinois.

WHO WILL PAY FOR IT?

Producers – defined as a business serving, selling, offering for sale, or distributing products and packaging in Illinois covered under the law – will be required to pay for and manage the recycling system. Because of the infinitesimal cost per package to producers, there have been no noticeable price increases in regions where packaging EPR programs are in place (Columbia School of Professional Studies, 2022). Furthermore, the law prohibits producers from charging consumers a point-of-sale fee to recoup the costs of compliance. In fact, without packaging EPR, consumers pay twice: first, for packaging, the cost of which is built into the product sticker price and second, for the packaging's collection, recycling, and disposal.

WHAT ARE THE SOCIAL BENEFITS?

The legislation will bring recycling programs to historically underserved areas of Illinois, including areas of environmental justice concern. No longer will areas of Illinois be known as "recycling deserts" as everyone will have access to recycling programs and the overall environmental benefits that a circular economy creates. Illinoisans will be able to make a difference every day by recycling and working together to make our communities cleaner and more resilient.

WHO WILL OVERSEE THE PROGRAM?

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) will oversee the PRO and approve its Producer Responsibility Program Plan. The Agency will also appoint an Advisory Committee to assist in program development, implementation, and oversight.

For more information, visit the Illinois Product Stewardship Council.

www.illinoispsc.org

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