



2024 Issue Paper: Waste Diversion

Background and League priorities

We all know the waste diversion mantra—reduce, reuse, recycle. Much has changed over the last 40 plus years as the characteristics of the solid waste we all produce. Disposal and diversion methods have changed as well. While managing solid waste is a smaller percentage of the contributions to climate change impacts, there are so many actions that citizens can take individually. But it's not just about individual responsibility, but also getting companies to take responsibility for the waste their products create. Incentivizing plastic waste reduction and better recycling outcomes will lead to creating a circular economy to divert waste from disposal.

The League of Women Voters has long-held positions in the Solid Waste Management area. Both LWWUS and LWWVA (1971 and 1972) adopted significant positions to manage solid and household hazardous waste. LWWUS published resources: *The Garbage Primer* (1992), *Recycling is More Than Collections* (1992), and *Plastic Waste Primer* (1993). Much has changed as we have moved into this 21st Century. We need more tools and methods for managing our solid waste.

Recent Legislative Progress in Washington State

Five bills passed the **2023** session:

- [ESHB 1033](#) Establishing an advisory committee to standardize composting across Washington.
- [SHB 1047](#) Eliminates sale of cosmetics that contain one of nine toxins as identified in the bill.
- [SHB 1085](#) Reducing plastic pollution with drinking fountain refill stations, phasing out mini-toiletries plastic packaging in lodgings, and banning foam-filled dock floats.
- [2SSB 5144](#) Providing for responsible environmental management of batteries.
- [SB 5287](#) Requiring a study on the recycling of wind turbine blades.

Also approved was a budget proviso to provide for technical study, surveys and listening sessions to move WRAP Act forward in next session.

In the **2022** session LWWVA began giving more attention to Solid Waste Management bills in the Washington legislature. LWWVA supported the comprehensive RENEW Act on extended producer responsibility and recycling which was not enacted. LWWVA supported two successful bills concerning the disposal of organics. Landfills are a significant source of methane which is more potent than CO₂ in the near term. The EPA estimates that 15.1% of methane emitted in the U.S. in 2019 was from [landfills](#).

- **Reducing organic material to landfill** ([HB 1799](#) / [SB 5731](#)) This bill establishes a statewide goal for the landfill disposal of organic materials at a level representing 75% reduction by 2030, relative to 2015, and a goal of 20% reduction in volume of edible food disposed (relative to 2015) to be recovered for human consumption by 2025.
- **Landfill methane gas** ([HB 1663](#)): HB 1663 bill will reduce methane emissions in Washington.

These bills passed in the **2020** legislative session.

- **Reusable Bag Bill** (2SHB 1205/[ESSB 5323](#)) – Relating to reducing pollution from plastic bags by establishing minimum state standards for the use of carryout bags at retail establishments: With a [statewide ban on single use plastic bags](#), an effort to reduce plastic pollution, litter, and waste.
- **Compost use** ([ESHB 2713](#)): to help restore soil health and to help reduce food waste
- **Revise recycling and reduce plastic pollution bill** (HB 1118/[SSB 5022](#)) –includes product stewardship for packaging and printed paper and other sections to implement the top recommendations in Ecology’s Plastics Study (October 2020): Recycled content for beverage containers, plastic trash bags and jugs/bottles; Ban expanded polystyrene (aka styrofoam) food service products, coolers and packing materials (peanuts); Optional serviceware. Requires utensils, straws, beverage cup lids and condiment packages be offered on request.

In the **2019** session, these bills passed.

- **Plastic Package Stewardship** (HB 1204/[E2SSB 5397](#)): A study bill that created data report that could lead to legislation that would improve our recycling system.
- **Food waste** ([E2SHB 1114](#)): Established a goal to reduce, by 50%, the amount of wasted food generated annually by 2030, relative to 2017 levels.
- **Compostability labeling** ([ESHB 1569](#)): Authorized the state’s attorney general and local governments to pursue false or misleading environmental claims and “greenwashing” for plastic products claiming to be “compostable” or “biodegradable” when in fact they are not.
- **Sustainable Recycling** ([2SHB 1543](#)/SSB 5545): Create a recycling development center.
- **Paint Stewardship** ([SHB 1652](#)): Require stewardship of discarded latex and oil-based paint (and it is being implemented).
- **Alternative to cremation** (SHB 1162/ [ESSB 5001](#))– Concerning human remains): Allows Alkaline hydrolysis or hydrolysis means the reduction of human remains.

Legislative Outlook for 2024

[HB 1131](#) Legislation on [extended producer responsibility](#) (EPR), recycling, and waste reduction will resurface in the 2024 session with a tweaked WRAP Act – Washington Recycling and Packaging Act. This comprehensive bill is being championed by Rep. Liz Berry (D-36). EPR is already happening in many places around the world, and in the last three years, four states (Maine, Oregon, California, Colorado) have passed similar bills. Bill supporters estimate that enacting The WRAP Act will put \$104 million back into our economy on an annual basis by saving resources, improving recycling, and reducing environmental impacts.

Other bills likely to return in 2024:

[HB 1392](#) Right to Repair

[HB 1164](#) Responsible management of appliances containing harmful gases and other materials

[HB 1185](#) Reducing environmental impacts associated with lighting products.

[SB 5245](#) Concerning biosolids.

And look for bills to expand recycling to include EV batteries, reduction of plastics, recycling of wind turbines, and increased composting. There are plans to introduce a stand-alone bottle bill.

For more information:

- Environmental Priorities Coalition <https://wecprotects.org/our-work/areas-of-work/environmental-priorities-coalition/>
- <http://plasticfreewashington.org/> - Producer Responsibility 101
<https://environmentamerica.org/washington/resources/the-washington-recycling-and-packaging-wrap-act/>
- <https://zerowastewashington.org/legislative-work/>

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