

US Gets First Product Stewardship Framework Law

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All across the United States, local governments, who carry the burden of waste disposal for their communities, have been overwhelmed by literal mountains of hazardous waste that are the byproducts—the unintended consequences—of our voracious consumer society. Because local governments are rarely if ever equipped to deal with a disposal problem of this magnitude, the result is that there has been a tremendous amount of dangerous substances leaching out from landfills, or out-gassing from incinerators into our air, our water and our bodies, taking a tremendous toll on our environment and our health. Some might say that the buck has been passed to them, both by the manufacturers who design these consumer goods, as well as the people who sell them and the people who buy them.



Robert D’Arcy, the Hazardous Material Manager for Santa Clara County, California said, “Local governments sit at the end of the pipe and unfortunately we fail miserably when it comes to managing these things, because we can’t effectively reach those people.”

In most industrial countries in the world, there are product stewardship laws that require manufacturers to bear responsibility for the ultimate disposition of their products, particularly if they contain toxic or otherwise dangerous

components. But not here. Why? Because what little dialog there has been between the stakeholders in this issue— businesses, local governments, and environmental groups—has been suspicious, and contentious if not outright adversarial, so there has been little progress in coming up with a legislative solution. Until this week, that is, when Maine governor John Baldacci signed the “[Act to Provide Leadership Regarding the Responsible Recycling of Consumer Products](#).” Representatives from several other states and D’Arcy were on hand to emphasize the national significance of the moment.