

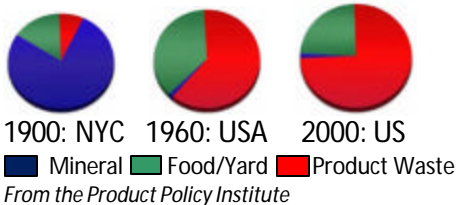
Rhode Island Campaign for Producer Responsibility



Manufacturing Waste

Local Government's Left Holding the (Trash) Bag

When local governments took on responsibility for solid waste more than a century ago, household waste was primarily coal ash left over from heating and cooking. The rest was mainly food and a small amount of simple manufactured products like paper and glass. Today manufactured products and their packaging make up 75% of what we throw away.



Business as usual has meant that most manufacturers don't pay anything to cover the costs of waste disposal. In fact, they're designing products to be thrown away— and taxpayers are picking up the tab. The demands of waste management and recycling have changed with time. Local governments today are stuck with ever increasing costs for the recycling and disposal of computers, cameras, pharmaceuticals, batteries, and countless other consumer products.

A Burden on Taxpayers

It's expensive to safely manage modern wastes, especially products that contain toxic or hazardous substances. Worse, products that aren't properly recycled or disposed can leech heavy metals, contaminate drinking water, and poison the local environment. Today, most consumer products move in a chain from producer to consumer to disposal site at the expense of taxpayers.



A Better Way: Producer Responsibility

Requiring manufacturers to pay for the collection and recycling of their products encourages them to design products that are less toxic, more durable and more recyclable. It also allows the end of use costs of the product to be incorporated into the total cost of a product. Creating the right incentives for manufacturers to make better products means less of a burden on taxpayers and on the environment. Products that are designed with less toxics will also have a competitive advantage in the market place.



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The Campaign for Producer Responsibility is a joint project of Clean Water Fund and Clean Water Action.

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Rhode Island Producer Responsibility Laws

Rhode Island already has some producer responsibility laws on the books.

The Electronic Waste Prevention, Reuse and Recycling Act and the Mercury Reduction and Education Act both require manufacturers to pay for the collection and recycling of their products.

These laws save tax dollars and encourage manufacturers to make products that are less toxic, more durable, and easier to recycle.

Time for a New Path

Producer Responsibility engages more players than just the local governments traditionally responsible for handling waste. This new approach outlines roles for consumers, citizens, government, industry, retailers, and other businesses that make or handle products and packaging.

- Some manufacturers and retailers in the U.S. have started to implement producer responsibility especially for products like computers, televisions and fluorescent bulbs.
- When government makes these types of programs mandatory, it levels the playing field for businesses so they can compete in a fair marketplace.
- Taxpayers groups like the producer responsibility strategy because it relies on the market, instead of tax dollars, to solve the problem.
- So far, producer responsibility laws in Rhode Island cover one category at a time as with e-waste and mercury products. A long-term approach provides one law that adopts producer responsibility principles for all products and gives the state's regulators the authority to make rules that make sense for each product.
- Producer Responsibility allows flexibility for manufacturers to decide how best to implement the recycling program given their individual business models and products.

Take Action: Join the Campaign

Clean Water Action is working with local governments to shift the burden of handling waste and recycling away from taxpayers. Across the country, local governments are beginning to work together to bring about effective producer responsibility policies.

Local governments in California, British Columbia, the Northwest, Wisconsin, Vermont, and Texas have formed Product Stewardship Councils to influence the development and adoption of producer responsibility policies. Working together through a Product Stewardship Council will result in more effective, comprehensive and quick results.

Join our campaign to create a Rhode Island Product Stewardship Council and make producer responsibility the new business-as-usual for Rhode Island.

For more information, contact:



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