

Press release:

**Relief in sight for Minnesotans' frustrated with packaging waste:
Packaging Waste and Cost Reduction Act calls for all packaging be recyclable by 2032**

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St. Paul, MN, May 24, 2024 – Last Tuesday, the Governor signed the Packaging Waste and Cost Reduction Act, which was a part of the environment and natural resources supplemental budget bill, authored by Representative Rick Hansen and Senator Fong Hawj.

Minnesota is now the fifth state with extended producer responsibility for packaging. “Minnesotans have long shown their desire and expectation for a robust statewide recycling system – but taxpayers can’t do it alone,” said Katrina Kessler, commissioner of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. “The new law ensures that manufacturers have a stake in recycling their products and ultimately that shared public/private investment will reduce our reliance on landfilling, benefit our air and climate, and create new economic opportunities for the state.”

The Packaging Waste and Cost Reduction Act reduces the burden on Minnesotans and holds producers accountable for the costs associated with reuse, recycling, and composting of packaging and paper products and incentivize redesign of those materials. Representative Sydney Jordan, the lead house author of the Packaging Waste and Cost Reduction Act said, “packaging will continue to grow and be a part of our waste that ultimately ends up in our landfills and in our trash incinerators. Currently the people responsible for the costs and stress of that is all of us. We are the ones paying taxes and fees – bearing the burden.”

This Act will increase access and convenience of recycling and composting services across the state and for all residents. Senator Kelly Morrison, the lead senate author of the Packaging Waste and Cost Reduction Act said, “Minnesota has a residential recycling rate of about 20%, which underperforms for all materials. 30% of Minnesotans don’t have access to recycling on par with trash and it is worse in greater MN and much worse in apartments and condominiums.”

The Packaging Waste and Cost Reduction Act will reshape how recycling is funded and will resolve frustration felt by Minnesotans in dealing with all the packaging overflowing from their trash cans. Hennepin County Board Chair Irene Fernando said, “Minnesota now joins the ranks of national zero-waste leaders working to create a future where less waste is created in the first place, where everyone shares responsibility, and where everyone benefits from more accessible services.”

The e-commerce and the delivery economy has led to a dramatic increase in packaging waste, which now accounts for 40% of waste. Much of the current packing is problematic for the recycling and composting systems.

“I’m proud of Minnesota for holding producers responsible to help reduce the burden of managing these ever-growing mountains of packaging waste,” said Ramsey County Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt, and chair of the Partnership on Waste to Energy. “By shifting the cost of recycling to producers we create an incentive to reduce waste and stop using

materials that are hard to recycle. We look forward to reducing costs to taxpayers, removing the burden from local governments, and making recycling easier for everybody.”

What we buy, how it’s packaged, and the options to dispose of it have a big impact on climate.

“Addressing climate change requires rethinking how we keep our valuable natural resource materials in use. This bill helps make this cycle possible,” said Paul Austin, Executive Director of Conservation Minnesota. “Asking manufacturers to do their part will lead to more reuse and recycling and less waste going to our landfills or trash burners.”

Developed over many years with a coalition of partners and amended during the legislative process, the Act includes:

- oversight and enforcement responsibilities by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency,
- reimbursement rates starting at 50% in 2029, increasing to 75% in 2030, and up to 90% from then on to reimburse existing waste haulers and recycling facilities, and
- funding for recycling education materials that will be consistent across the entire state.

A producer responsibility organization and advisory board must be appointed by January 1, 2025. An in-depth analysis of our current reuse, recycling, and composting system – called a needs assessment – must be completed by December 31, 2026. Lists of what must be accepted for recycling and composting will be established along with setting statewide goals for the program by the agency.

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About the organizations:

The Partnership on Waste and Energy is a Joint Powers Board formed by Hennepin, Ramsey and Washington counties to collaborate in areas of waste and energy management, including legislation and policy development, communication and outreach, planning and evaluation of waste processing technologies.

Conservation Minnesota is a nonpartisan organization working to protect the Minnesota you love by solving our state’s most important conservation problems. The organization is built around the idea of bringing people together across regions, background, and we strive to first listen and then work together to find real solutions.