

INITIATIVE THAT PROVIDES COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTION TO PLASTIC POLLUTION WILL APPEAR ON CALIFORNIA'S NOVEMBER 2022 BALLOT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 19, 2021

Contacts:

Nick Lapis, Californians Against Waste: nicklapis@cawrecycles.org | 415.845.6335
Heidi Sanborn, National Stewardship Action Council: Heidi@nsaction.us | 916.217.1109
Genevieve Abedon, Clean Seas Lobbying Coalition: genevieve@ecoconsult.biz | 802.598.1669

SACRAMENTO--It's official: California voters will have the chance to approve a first-in-the-nation law that could effectively end certain major sources of plastic pollution. Today, Secretary of State Dr. Shirley Weber has [certified](#) the qualification of the California Recycling and Plastic Pollution Reduction Act, confirming that it will appear on the November 2022 ballot.

The measure provides a comprehensive solution to California's plastic waste crisis, from product manufacturing and use, to disposal and recycling, to polluted habitat restoration and neighborhood clean-up. Through a maximum one-cent per item fee on manufacturers of plastic packaging and foodware, the measure will make a once-in-a-generation investment in communities and natural resources to both prevent the harmful effects of plastic pollution and clean-up their impacts. These investments include:

- **Reducing waste:** Funding for a variety of activities to reduce waste that goes to landfills and incinerators, including through design changes, composting, and other proven strategies.
- **Updating recycling:** Shifting the increasing cost of handling non-recyclable packaging from residential ratepayers to the companies that make the products would allow California to have a modern recycling system.
- **Cleaning up polluted communities and the environment:** Litter clean-up in neighborhoods and habitat restoration in rivers, streams, beaches, and parks.
- **Re-introducing recycled materials into the California economy:** Increasing access to recycled materials for California's manufacturers will not only create hundreds of thousands of jobs but lead to a more circular economy.

Californians have widespread concern about the negative effects of plastic production and pollution, which is why over 900,000 signed the petition to place the initiative on the ballot in spite of the pandemic's interruption of the 2020 circulation period. A [2020 survey](#) by the Public Policy Institute of California shows that 94% of Californians see plastics and marine debris as a problem on the California coasts closest to where they live, and [a poll conducted by FM3 indicated 7 in 10 prospective voters would support this measure](#). Californians are clearly ready for comprehensive solutions that address plastic waste.

And Californians are right to be concerned about the amount of plastic waste in their state: Tiny pieces of plastic waste called microplastics are found throughout California's waterways, from the [San Francisco Bay](#), to [Monterey Bay](#), to [Lake Tahoe](#). The state [has acknowledged](#) the need to identify and monitor microplastics in the drinking water supply because of the [chemicals they contain](#) that can pose threats to human health. Wildlife and ecosystem health suffers from plastic pollution, too: animals that eat microplastics can die; and endocrine-disrupting chemicals in plastic pollution

can get distributed up and down the food chain, including human food. Plastic hurts air, water, land, and food systems.

Further, plastic pollution already costs California communities too much money: [According to the California Coastal Commission](#), a 2012 study found that 90 west coast communities spend more than \$520 million annually in taxpayer dollars on addressing litter, on top of residential ratepayers who shoulder the cost of dealing with non-recyclable trash. Plastic pollution harms communities before, during, and after it is manufactured: new plastic that doesn't include recycled content starts with fossil fuel drilling and extraction, and it results in lasting pollution when trash is deposited in landfills, burned in incinerators, leaches chemicals into soil and water supplies, or emits greenhouse gases.

The measure addresses these issues in a comprehensive, yet localized way -- ensuring that the whole state benefits in tangible ways based on what individual communities need most to combat plastic pollution.

The measure will appear on the California statewide ballot for the general election on November 8, 2022.

For more information, please see the [text of the initiative](#).

###

What supporters are saying about the PlasticsFreeCA initiative:

Nick Lapis, Californians Against Waste: “The manufacturers of disposable plastic products and packaging have been making empty promises for decades, all the while they have hired lobbyists to stop any legislation designed to actually reign in the amount of plastic pollution they generate. It’s time for the voters to get a say.”

Jordan Wells, National Stewardship Action Council: “In 1989, California passed AB 939 which established a waste management hierarchy that made source reduction our highest priority. However, very little has been done to reduce waste at the source, which would reduce system costs. This ballot proposition is the solution. Now, Californians will decide if they prefer the status quo over taking meaningful action to achieve the goals set by the legislature more than three decades ago.”

Genevieve Abedon, on behalf of Clean Seas Lobbying Coalition: “Californians deeply care about eliminating plastic pollution in their communities, parks, and waterways. The best way to do so is to reduce waste *before* it is created, which is why the Clean Seas Lobbying Coalition helped assure that source reduction is part of this comprehensive ballot initiative solution. It’s also time that producers pay for their polluting products, and that voters get more of a say than industry-funded lobbyists about what is truly reusable, recyclable, and compostable in their beloved state of California.”

Linda Escalante, California Coastal Commissioner and official initiative proponent: “Nearly eleven million tons of plastic enter the ocean each year, mostly from single-use plastic items like bags, bottle caps, water bottles, and Styrofoam™ cups. Consumer use of these products is measured in days or minutes, while the environmental, public health, and social

costs are measured in generations or centuries. The highest costs being disproportionately borne by low income people and communities of color.”

Katherine O’Dea, Save Our Shores: “After the impacts of climate change, ocean plastic pollution is the next greatest crisis we must address if there is to be any hope of quality of life for next generations. Our climate and our ocean are interdependent systems that provide the conditions required to support life on planet Earth. We have to stop allowing companies to produce and use more and more single-use plastic items that spew carbon into our atmosphere during resource extraction and item production, litter our landscape and our shores and find their way into our life giving ocean after their incredibly short life span, and never go away. Plastic pollution ends up in our food chain along with all the toxins, endocrine disruptors, mutagens, carcinogens and obesogens used to produce them. It’s criminal. But now voters will have the opportunity to say enough is enough.

Miho Ligare, Surfrider Foundation: “Addressing plastic pollution is a core pillar of the Surfrider Foundation’s ocean advocacy and we have been a leader in tackling this issue head-on for over a decade. The need for urgent action to reduce plastic pollution is undeniably clear. Eliminating non-reusable, non-recyclable and non-compostable products and foodware, in addition to reducing packaging, are by far the most effective and least expensive ways to protect the health of people, wildlife and the environment. This innovative and comprehensive ballot initiative will move us in the right direction toward making tangible impacts in tackling this plastic crisis.”

Jeanne Merrill, California Climate & Agriculture Network (CalCAN): “This Act would tax polluters and invest some of those dollars in California’s efforts to provide resources for farmers and ranchers to adapt and address the climate crisis by building healthy soils. In this way, our farms and ranches can become carbon sinks, improve their resilience to drought and other extreme weather events, and reduce the use of synthetic inputs to protect our air and water.”

Dana Gunders, ReFED: “This Act would continue to make California a leader in cutting waste, while also supporting our ability to achieve existing goals. It’s good for people and good for natural resources.”

Doug Kobold, California Product Stewardship Council: “For too long now, the ratepayers and taxpayers of California have had to shoulder the cost burdens associated with poorly designed and problematic products, thanks to manufacturers that refuse to design their products with the environment in mind. We all lose when manufacturers make wasteful and environmentally costly decisions when it comes to product design and material use. We need manufacturers to take responsibility for their products, design green products, and pay their fair share when it comes to handling their products at end-of-life. Californians have an opportunity to tell these manufacturers to make these changes now or pay for the poor choices that they continue to make.”

Alison Waliszewski, The 5 Gyres Institute: “Californians deserve policies that are informed by the latest science on plastic pollution and how it impacts public health, not by the Plastics Industry’s lobbying dollars. Plastics leach harmful toxins like Polyfluoroalkyl substances and styrene, which are commonly found in take-out containers, to-go ware and plastic cutlery. These toxins end up in our bodies through contaminated food and are known to be endocrine disruptors and cause birth defects. Industry-led narratives often make it seem that this is simply a litter problem, with cleanups and recycling being the solution. California has the opportunity to

change that tired narrative by focusing on source reduction and extended producer responsibility in order to impart true change to the entire supply chain of plastic.”

Jenn Engstrom, CALPIRG: “Every day Californians throw away millions of single-use plastic containers, foodware, packaging and other plastic “stuff.” Because it can take hundreds of years to fully degrade and most can’t be recycled, we need to dramatically reduce the amount of plastic waste that ends up clogging our landfills, littering our streets, and polluting our ocean. Nothing we use for a few minutes should pollute our future for hundreds of years.”

Shelley Luce, Heal the Bay: “The impact of toxic plastic waste is seen every day in our environment. Heal the Bay experiences this issue firsthand at our beach cleanups. Our volunteers have removed over 4 million pieces of trash and single-use plastic items from the Southern California coastline since 2002. The negative impacts of plastic aren’t limited to our coast. It pollutes and contributes to climate change at every stage in its lifecycle. Plastic is made from fossil fuels, which cause air and water pollution throughout the manufacturing process—from extraction to refining to production to disposal. These pollution burdens disproportionately impact low-income communities and communities of color. To address the plastic problem, we need to drastically reduce plastic production at the source, and California voters have the exciting opportunity to do just that in 2022 through this comprehensive ballot initiative.”

Jane Williams, California Communities Against Toxics: “We breathe plastic, we eat plastic, and we drink plastic everyday. Plastic is now a pervasive and perverse pollutant that degrades our beautiful state and its peoples. The entire life cycle of plastic, from its cradle at the oil well, to its grave in our bodies, on our beaches and in our landfills, impacts our environmental justice communities. We must take bold action to end plastic pollution and this ballot initiative is an important step to move our state toward a plastic-free future.”

Mike Young, California League of Conservation Voters (CLCV): “Californians are sick of plastic waste, and the problem continues to worsen as litter creeps its way into our neighborhoods, cities, and precious landscapes. The problem should have been solved long ago. But of course it hasn’t. The plastics industry is another face for Big Oil, and the last thing these corporate polluters would ever do is let good public policy stand in the way of their profits. Voters have been far ahead of lawmakers on this issue, and we now have a chance to take matters into our own hands. Let’s pass this initiative and finally make the policy change Californians have been asking for and deserve.”

Dianna Cohen, Co-Founder and CEO of Plastic Pollution Coalition: “Plastic pollutes our beautiful California coastline as well as our own bodies. This ballot initiative is an important opportunity for Californians to protect our environment, marine life, and our health from the toxic impacts of plastic—and to help stop expansion of the petrochemical industry as it wreaks havoc on communities and the climate. We started our work in California in 2009 and are excited to finally see this initiative on the ballot; it’s been a long time coming.”