

SB 501 – Household Hazardous Waste Producer Responsibility SENATOR BEN ALLEN Fact Sheet

SUMMARY

SB 501 will continue California’s tradition of protecting consumers and our environment from toxic pollutants by creating an extended producer responsibility (EPR) program for household hazardous waste (HHW). SB 501 requires producers of specified HHW products to fund and ensure convenient access to a system for the safe collection, transportation, and disposal of HHW.

BACKGROUND

Thousands of everyday household products, from pool chemicals to oven cleaners to antifreeze, are classified as HHW since they pose threats to residents, workers, and the environment if improperly managed at their end-of-life.

Disposal of most HHW is regulated by the Department of Toxic Substance Control through a requirement on municipal solid waste entities to provide for safe collection, along with a prohibition on these products being sent to landfills. Local jurisdictions manage this obligation through a mix of permanent collection facilities, temporary facilities, and curbside collection, some of which may only be designed to handle a subset of HHW products. These existing collection options also may pose logistical barriers for consumers to easily utilize, such as having limited hours.

Various HHW products, including paint-related products, mercury thermostats, certain electronic wastes, used motor oil, and batteries are already subject to various levels of stewardship programs to encourage safe collection, reduction of waste, and producer accountability for product end-of-life. However, there is a significant scope of HHW not under existing programs, leaving local jurisdictions and their residents responsible.

The state has offered grants to support expanding collection infrastructure, but funding has fallen far short of what is needed to keep pace. For example, while CalRecycle’s facilities grant program has a cap of \$5 million a year, the expected construction cost of a new facility in Sonoma is between \$13-16 million.

The current patchwork system and lack of consumer education leads to improper disposal and puts California families, workers, ecosystems, and water sources at risk. For instance, CalRecycle’s [material characterization study in 2023](#) found hazardous materials mixed in with the recycling streams.

EPR refers to a policy framework that places shared or full responsibility on managing the end-of-life of a product on to the producers of that product and entities in the product chain, rather than on local governments and consumers. This usually utilizes a producer responsibility organization (PRO) made up of industry companies, which develops and implements a plan for end-of-life management under oversight of a public entity. EPR can also incentivize producers to make more sustainable product design choices, such as reducing toxicity of a product or right-sizing to reduce waste. [Provinces in Canada](#) are successfully utilizing EPR to manage HHW, and [Vermont](#) passed legislation in 2023 to implement an HHW EPR program beginning summer of 2025.

SOLUTION

SB 501 creates a more comprehensive system of managing HHW with a producer-funded EPR program, required to enhance consumer convenience and improve the collection and management of problematic HHW products.

Producers of specified HHW products must join a PRO and develop a plan detailing how the industry will meet this standard. The plan’s costs will be proportionally distributed to member producers based on sales volume and relative disposal costs, encouraging less toxic alternatives and ensuring producers pay their fair share.

SUPPORT

National Stewardship Action Council (Co-Sponsor)
Rural County Representative of California (Co-Sponsor)
Resource Recovery Coalition of California (Co-Sponsor)

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