

US plastic waste Bill to prompt textile microfibre action

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WASHINGTON – Working with the National Stewardship Action Council (NSAC), US senators from New Mexico and California have circulated a discussion draft of what could be landmark legislation that would ban certain plastic products and require manufacturers to take responsibility for collecting and recycling materials they produce.

The proposed bill is interesting in that it's likely to prompt further proposed legislation that targets synthetic microfibres derived from textiles, which are already creeping on to the US political agenda. "I have legislators in California which have already introduced legislation to address microfibres and local governments ready to introduce ordinances making every clothes washer have microfibre filters," Heidi Sanborn, Executive director of the NSAC told *Ecotextile News* in an interview to be published in the next edition of the printed magazine.

Democrat senators Tom Udall representing New Mexico and Alan Lowenthal who represents California have circulated a [discussion draft](#) of potentially landmark legislation to tackle plastic waste in the USA. The lawmakers are now seeking public comments and stakeholder input, before they plan to introduce the bill in Congress after an initial comment period received over 150 responses.

"The sheer volume of plastic pollution that is inundating our communities, our waterways, and even our bodies is nothing short of a crisis," said Udall. "Our children are already bearing the cleanup costs of a generation of single-use plastic that is clogging our rivers and is infiltrating our food chain."

"Today we face a global plastic pollution crisis that threatens our waterways, wildlife, and public health," Lowenthal noted. "The amount of plastic waste in our communities and the oceans is evidence of the urgent need to tackle this issue, an effort in which the United States is currently lagging. The European Union, Canada, and even India and China are taking bold actions to address this growing crisis."

He noted that there is currently no incentive in the USA to reduce and reuse plastic, or for producers to use recycled plastics. "That is why the legislation I am introducing with Senator Udall is so important," he said. "The financial burden of cleaning up pollution should not be borne by taxpayers alone. The manufactures and companies who sell the products must be held accountable for the end use of their products."

Essentially, the proposed legislation would force plastic producers to take responsibility for collecting and recycling materials; require national container deposits; fees on non-reusable bags; new minimum recycled content requirements; a moratorium on the construction of new plastics facilities; and a ban on certain plastics products such as drinkware, carryout bags and certain types of packaging.

Although textiles are not mentioned in the bill, the NSAC says this is already in the pipeline – and almost inevitable – in no small part due to the issue of textile microfibre pollution. And it's not just in California, according to Sanborn. "I won't say which other states are considering it, as that is up to them to introduce and go public when they are ready, but this is a big deal and it (microfibre) will be regulated soon," she told us.

Sanborn, who is working with Udall and Lowenthal to provide direct amendments, hints that this will happen sooner rather than later in the USA, "my guess is 2020 you will have ordinances and state bills passing," adding that: "the textile industry needs a game plan to address it, or as I always say, if you are not at the table you will be on the menu."

The process is open to anyone to participate. A summary of the outline as well as instructions on how to respond are detailed below. Those interested in writing comments are invited to submit them by Close of Business, Thursday, November 21st, 2019.

You can download the discussion draft here: <https://www.tomudall.senate.gov/download/plastics-leg>



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