

RELEASE: Bills to Create Statewide Battery Recycling Program Approved by California Legislature

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Sacramento, Calif. — After years of effort to address battery waste and recycling, the California State Legislature today passed a pair of bills, SB 1215 and AB 2440, which will create a statewide collection and recycling program for consumer batteries and products that contain batteries.

California classifies batteries as hazardous waste and bans them from solid waste landfills because of the hazardous metals and corrosive materials that batteries contain. When improperly discarded, batteries pose serious fire, health and safety hazards that disrupt the state’s waste stream and poison the environment.

“From talking greeting cards to electronic toothbrushes to smartwatches, even though battery-embedded products are now so thoroughly integrated into our modern lives, there was still no standardized system for the safe and efficient collection and disposal of this class of potentially hazardous waste,” said **Senator Josh Newman (D-Fullerton), author of SB 1215**. “This ground-breaking legislation represents a real solution to a longstanding problem and California will be better for its passage.”

SB 1215 expands California’s existing Electronic Waste Recycling Act to include products containing batteries that cannot be easily removed with household tools. This legislation helps to curb the amount of battery-embedded products that are improperly disposed of so that they no longer pose a danger to the companies and employees charged with managing our waste stream.

“Few people know that batteries are actually hazardous waste and those of us who do have containers of used batteries we don’t know what to do with. This means the majority of batteries end up in curbside waste bins, causing damage to our recycling facilities which ultimately requires rate payers to pay more on our utility bills,” said **Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin (D-Thousand Oaks), author of AB 2440**. “AB 2440 changes this dynamic and requires the producer to pay for the collection of these batteries. With so many of our everyday household items being powered by batteries, we have a responsibility to alleviate the potential danger and recover the valuable minerals used in their production.”

AB 2440 establishes the nation’s largest extended-producer responsibility (EPR) battery program. Creating convenient collection and recycling for batteries, this bill will eliminate the threat of fires at waste facilities and the recovery and reuse of the valuable and finite minerals contained in the batteries.

Together, these pieces of legislation will replace the current confusing and unsafe process for battery disposal with a safe, convenient, and accessible system for consumers to dispose of depleted batteries and battery-embedded products.

SB 1215 and AB 2440 await signature from the Governor.

WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING

“SB 1215 and AB 2440 are the culmination of more than four years of effort by the legislature to address the existential threat that improperly-disposed batteries pose to our recycling system,” said **Nick Lapis, Director of Advocacy for Californians Against Waste, a co-sponsor of the bills.** “Together these bills will give consumers free and convenient battery recycling options for loose batteries and devices that have batteries, which will not only keep batteries out of our environment but will also create thousands of recycling jobs and will reduce the need for destructive mining of finite materials.”

“After working on this issue since 2014, including several legislative attempts with one in 2014 and then the last four years straight, there is finally a consumer convenient solution to collect and properly manage both loose batteries and battery-embedded products”, said **Doug Kobold, executive director of the California Product Stewardship Council, a co-sponsor of the bills.** He goes on to say that “without the perseverance of our Co-Sponsors, and more importantly, our Principal Co-Authors of both AB 2440 and SB 1215 and their staff members, we would not be here today. “

“This year alone, RethinkWaste has already suffered 6 fires due to a lithium-ion or suspected lithium-ion battery. I fear every day an improperly disposed of product with an embedded battery or loose battery could result in another catastrophic fire like the one we faced in 2016,” said **Joe LaMariana, Executive Director of RethinkWaste, a co-sponsor of the bills.** “SB 1215 and AB 2440 together will protect our workers and infrastructure from the growing number of batteries entering the waste stream on a daily basis. We are grateful for Senator Newman and Assemblymember Irwin's leadership on this critical issue.”

“I am proud to coauthor SB 1215 and AB 2440. I have seen firsthand the damage caused by improperly discarded, lithium-ion batteries which can result in serious fire, health, and safety hazards. There has been an alarming number of fires in material recovery facilities, waste collection trucks, and landfills caused by improperly disposed of lithium-ion batteries including the Shoreway Environmental Center in San Carlos. Such fires not only pollute the atmosphere and surrounding community, cause extensive damage to city and county waste collection vehicles, equipment, and facilities, they also endanger the lives of workers who handle consumer waste. The Responsible Recycling Act will ensure that consumers have free access to collection sites while waste disposal workers are kept more safe from these fire prone products,” said **Assemblymember Kevin Mullin (D-San Mateo).**

“California must do a better job recycling materials and sorting out what ends up in our landfills. Batteries are health and safety hazards for our environment and our workers. That is why I support this bill to provide a convenient and accessible system for consumers to dispose of their batteries. It will prevent fires, protect workers and reduce toxic waste,” said **Senator Bob Wieckowski (D-Fremont)**.

“Today, even well-meaning Californians can create dire safety hazards – like the 2016 fire at the San Carlos materials recovery facility – by placing rechargeable batteries into the wrong recycling stream. SB 1215 and AB 2440 will make it easier for Californians to safely recycle used household batteries, including the rechargeable lithium-ion batteries that can explode and ignite fires if they are not disposed of properly. I’m a proud coauthor of this common-sense bill to simplify what is now a confusing, multi-step process for Californians who want to do the right thing with their depleted batteries. Thank you to Senator Newman and Assemblymember Irwin for their leadership on this legislation,” said **Senator Josh Becker (D-Peninsula)**.

“Consumers want to recycle, but we need to make it easier for them to do the right thing,” said **Assemblywoman Cottie Petrie-Norris (D-Irvine)**. “By making recycling free and convenient, rechargeable Li-ion batteries will only be delivering energy to our products and no longer a toxic threat to our environment.”

“It is estimated that 65% of California’s waste fires have been sparked by lithium ion batteries. Despite the fact that it is already illegal to dispose of these batteries, their increased use has led to a corresponding increase in their improper disposal, resulting in fires to waste collection vehicles and facilities. California needs to address the issue head on. That is why I am proud to join Senator Newman and Assemblymember Irwin as a coauthor of the Responsible Battery Recycling Act which will establish a long overdue battery collection and recycling program,” said **Senator Bob Archuleta (D-Pico Rivera)**.

To schedule an interview with Senator Newman, contact Lizzie Cootsona at 916.651.4029 and to schedule an interview with Assemblymember Irwin, contact Joel Price at 916.319.2144.

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State Senator Josh Newman represents the 29th Senate District, which is comprised of portions of Los Angeles County, Orange County, and San Bernardino County. The 29th District includes all or parts of the cities of Anaheim, Brea, Buena Park, Chino Hills, City of Industry, Cypress, Diamond Bar, Fullerton, La Habra, La Palma, Placentia, Rowland Heights, Stanton, Walnut, West Covina and Yorba Linda. Senator Newman is a former United States Army officer, businessperson, and veterans’ advocate, and lives in Fullerton with his wife and daughter.

Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin represents California's 44th Assembly District, which includes the communities of Camarillo, El Rio, Moorpark, Oxnard, Port Hueneme, Thousand Oaks, and Westlake Village. Assemblymember Irwin's website:
<http://asmdc.org/irwin>