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Governor Newsom Ratifies California's Responsible Textile Recovery Act

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CALIFORNIA GOVERNOR GAVIN NEWSOM. GARY CORONADO / LOS ANGELES TIMES VIA GETTY IMAGES

California's landmark textile reuse and recycling bill was quietly signed into law over the weekend, making the state the first in the nation to implement a fashion- and textile-focused [extended producer responsibility](#) (EPR) scheme.

Governor Gavin Newsom ratified SB 707, the Responsible Textile Recovery Act, two days before the signing deadline and one month after its [passage in the state legislature](#).

First introduced by [State Senator Josh Newman](#) (D-Fullerton) in spring of 2023, the bill has seen multiple [iterations](#) and amassed considerable input from textile and apparel trade groups, recyclers, thrifts and a multitude of other industry stakeholders.

Under the law, "producers" of clothing and fabric goods will now be on the hook for paying into a producer responsibility organization (PRO) to manage the collection, sortation, redirecting and recycling of the waste generated by their products.

"I'm very proud to see [SB 707](#) signed into law. It will have a major positive impact on California's environment and communities," Newman said in a statement Monday. "SB 707 isn't just about recycling; it's about transforming the way we think about textile waste."

The lawmaker said the framework will "create new opportunities for every Californian to participate in a more sustainable future," beginning with the items in their closets.

"By 2030, convenient drop-off locations for used textiles across the state will provide everyone with a free and simple way to be part of the solution," he added. "California is again at the forefront of innovation, proving we can lead the way in creating a circular and sustainable textile economy that benefits everyone."

The California Product Stewardship Council (CPSC), which served as the bill's chief sponsor, worked alongside the senator's office to craft the bill's language and liaise with brands, manufacturers and advocacy organizations.

"The industry really showed up for the stakeholder process to make the final version as impactful as possible," Joanne Brasch, CPSC's director of advocacy, said Monday. "We've seen brands and associations endorse the bill for a more equitable solution to a systematic problem. The program will incentivize producers to adopt less wasteful production and greener designs."

While the bill's authors applauded the historic legislation's final push across the finish line, even industry groups that engaged in the drafting process believe there's significant work to be done in charting a course forward.

The American Apparel and Footwear Association (AAFA), which has been critical of parts of the legislation, is now on a mission to help its members achieve compliance. Senior director of [sustainability](#) Chelsea Murtha said the Washington trade group aims to work closely with CalRecycle, the branch of the California Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) tasked with SB 707's implementation, along with AAFA members engaged in establishing and executing the EPR program.

"The first step on that journey will be founding an effective Producer Responsibility Organization (PRO)," she said. "Over the past month, AAFA has intensified conversations with PROs from other industries, as well as key stakeholders in our industry, to ensure we are in the best possible position to assist with PRO formation."

American Circular Textiles (ACT), an industry group bringing together fashion industry heavyweights like H&M and [Reformation](#), as well as resale platforms like The RealReal, ThredUp and Vestiaire Collective and recycling innovators like Circ and Supercircle, has also been at the forefront of fighting on behalf of the industry for provisions that it believes will make the framework's aspirations achievable.

ACT and Circular Services Group CEO Rachel Kibbe said it was "exciting" to see the bill passed over the weekend, calling it "an important milestone in holding the fashion industry accountable for its waste."

She also expressed satisfaction that the final text included what the group sees as "key improvements"—from elucidating rules for funding textile reuse, recycling, and repair initiatives to an expanded definition of recycling technologies. The finalized law includes support for private and nonprofit participation in sorting, reuse and recycling efforts, eco-modulation incentives and a two-year needs assessment.

"The critical improvements ideally help further support reuse and recycling in the state, and if effective, catalyze further circularity efforts at the global level, since California is the world's fifth-largest economy," Kibbe said.

California will indeed have the eyes of the world upon it as it implements the first-of-its-kind bill. But the ACT executive said the passage of SB 707 nonetheless underscores "the urgent need for a federal waste policy" that unifies the country in a mission to address textile waste.

"Without one, we risk a patchwork of state-level bills that can create fragmented and inconsistent regulations across the country," she said. "We face the potentials of sustainability teams turning focus and resources to compliance, over innovation and true progress. A unified federal approach would streamline the system, prevent disjointed efforts, and better enable businesses to comply across state lines."

Kibbe implored more fashion companies to engage with groups like ACT so they can take part in shaping the future of environmental policy—laws that will impact their operations for decades to come.

"The industry can no longer rely on voluntary commitments—accountability is now law," she said. "Defensive advocacy is the most costly." Kibbe said by working with organizations like ACT, "businesses can better navigate this transition, share best practices, and collaborate on the innovations that will define a circular economy."

"SB 707 is a signal that the future is here, and it's time for real partnership between industry and industry groups to make it a reality," she added.

Los Angeles women's wear brand and ACT member Reformation is hopeful about the future of the Responsible Textile Recovery Act and what it could mean for the industry at large, far outside the borders of the Golden State.

"The Reformation team is excited that SB 707 was signed. It feels like a buoy in the uncharted waters of EPR here in the United States," chief sustainability officer and vice president of operations Kathleen Talbot told Sourcing Journal.

"We hope it is the start of the necessary transition to a more circular economy for textiles, and will help increase the speed and scale of solutions here in California and beyond," she added. "There is obviously still a lot of work to do to operationalize the bill, but now there will be real accountability to make it happen."

Bay Area-based Everlane, which signed on in support of the bill early in the writing process, joined CPSC's Statewide Textile Recovery Advisory Committee (STRAC) in 2022 to provide feedback. Sustainability director Katina Boutis said the brand is "dedicated to supporting key legislation that will help move our industry forward."

"Over the past few weeks, we also engaged directly with our elected officials and industry groups to support crucial amendments to SB 707, ensuring that it builds the necessary infrastructure and funding to support innovations in reuse and textile-to-[textile recycling](#)," she told Sourcing Journal.

"While we are proud of our own accomplishments in this space, we need all companies to take bold action and accountability on textile reuse and circularity," Boutis said. "We believe that SB 707 is the first step in holding companies accountable to enable circularity in textiles. We are proud to have supported this landmark legislation in California and the U.S., and look forward to seeing its timely implementation."

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