



Assembly Bill 1276: Reduce Unnecessary Food Accessories

SUMMARY

AB 1276 will build on California's existing efforts to combat waste from single-use items. Providing food and beverage accessories *only* upon request to customers will significantly reduce unnecessary waste and save businesses and local governments money.

BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM

Every year in the United States, an estimated 561 billion disposable foodware items are used, resulting in a whopping 4.9 million tons of waste.¹ Unused food accessories including utensils, straws, napkins, condiment packages, and otherwise clog landfills, complicate recycling, and pollute streets and waterways in our communities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased takeout and food delivery, which restaurants are relying upon to stay afloat. The use of disposable food accessories has contributed to a 250-300% increase in single-use plastics and a 30% increase in waste.² Currently, many food facilities and food delivery services provide single-use food and beverage accessories regardless of whether or not they are needed. Most customers do not want them or have reusable items at home and/or in their workplaces; as a result, these accessories are usually discarded without being used.

Furthermore, global health experts and U.S. health officials agree that there's no evidence that COVID-19 can spread through food or food packaging.³

Restaurants in the U.S. spend \$19 billion purchasing disposable foodware items. California restaurants that have voluntarily made the transition to a combination of by request and reusable foodware have been proven to save between \$3,000 and \$21,000 per year⁴, while reducing waste and greenhouse gas emissions.

California's local governments and taxpayers spend over \$428 million annually in ongoing efforts to clean up and prevent litter in streets, storm drains, parks and waterways.⁵ Recyclers are now faced with a worsened crisis, as the vast majority of these non-recyclable single-use food accessories debase recycling systems and can contaminate many commercial compost facilities. This increases costs to collection, sorting, processing and disposal for cities and ratepayers.

Many of these food accessories are made of plastic, and the increasing surge in plastic use exacerbates health risks predominantly in communities of color and/or low-income communities. The production of plastic emits greenhouse gases and harms communities near oil refineries, plastic production facilities, and

¹ [Overbrook Foundation. "The Dirty Truth About Disposable Foodware" February 2020](#)

² [The Economist. "Covid-19 has led to a pandemic of plastic pollution" June 23, 2020](#)

³ [United Press International. "FDA: No evidence COVID-10 spreads through food, food packaging" February 19, 2021](#)

⁴ [ReThink Disposable](#)

⁵ [NRDC. "The Annual Cost to California Communities of Reducing Litter That Pollutes Our Waterways" August 2013](#)

landfills or incinerators. As such, steps must be taken to protect the public health of these communities.

SOLUTION

In order to address this issue, AB 1276 expands the plastic straws upon request law to include more single-use foodware accessories, other food facilities, and third-party delivery platforms. Specifically, this bill:

- Prohibits a food facility or third-party delivery platform from providing single-use foodware accessories unless requested by a consumer;
- Prohibits food facilities from bundling single-use foodware accessories.
- Provides food facilities the flexibility to offer single-use foodware accessories to drive-through consumers *only*.
- Allows food facilities located within public airports to offer single-use foodware accessories to consumers.

Source reduction is by far the most efficient and cost-effective way to protect resources and communities, and help California reach its waste diversion and climate goals. Reducing unnecessary food accessories is a simple solution and a win-win for reducing waste in the first place, saving businesses money, and relieving recyclers, composters and local governments from the complications and costs associated with it.

SUPPORT

Clean Seas Lobbying Coalition (Sponsor)
The 5 Gyres Institute
The Center for Oceanic Awareness, Research
and Education (COARE)
Heal the Bay

Northern California Recycling Association
(NCRA)
Plastic Oceans International
Plastic Pollution Coalition
Save Our Shores
Seventh Generation Advisors
UPSTREAM
Wishtoyo Chumash Foundation
Zero Waste USA
Active San Gabriel Valley
Agromin
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American Refuse
Audubon California
Azul
Ban SUP
Breast Cancer Prevention Partners
Burrtec
Cafe Aquatica
California Association of Zoos and Aquariums
California Catholic Conference
California Coastkeeper Alliance
California Compost Coalition
California Interfaith Power & Light
California League of Conservation Voters
California Product Stewardship Council
California Reuse Collective
Californians Against Waste
CALPIRG
Cal-Waste
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Environmental Health
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City of Beverly Hills
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City of San Francisco
City of Santa Cruz
City of Sunnyvale
City of Los Angeles Councilmember, 13th
District, Mitch O'Farrell
City of Los Angeles Councilmember, 5th
District, Paul Koretz

City of Los Angeles Councilmember, 2nd District, Paul Krekorian
City of Thousand Oaks
County of Los Angeles
Clover Flat
County of Los Angeles
County of San Francisco
City of Thousand Oaks
CLEANFLEETS.NET
Clean Water Action
Climate Reality LA
Community Environmental Council
Compost Manufacturing Alliance
Courage California
Ecology Center
Elders Climate Action, NorCal/SoCal Chapters
Families Advocating for Chemical & Toxins Safety (FACTS)
Founder of Joshua Tree Music Festival
Friends Committee on Legislation of California
Goodwerks
Green Mary
Green Valley Community Farm
Greentown Los Altos
Grubhub
Habits of Waste
Klean Kanteen
League to Save Lake Tahoe
Marin County Board of Supervisors
Marin Sanitary Service
Maury's Bagels & Appetizing
MINT + CRAFT Cafe and Mercantile
Monterey Bay Aquarium
Muuse
Napa Climate Now
Napa Recycling and Waste Services
National Stewardship Action Council
Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)
Oceana
Ocean Conservancy
Orange County Coastkeeper
Pier 23 Cafe Restaurant & Bar
Pleasanton Garbage Service, Inc.
Ponce's Mexican Restaurant
RAISE High Road Restaurants
Race to Zero Waste

Rainbow Grocery Cooperative, Inc.
Real Good Fish
Recology
ReFuel
Republic Services
Resource Renewal Institute
RethinkWaste
Robin's Restaurant
Santa Barbara Channelkeeper
Sea Hugger
Seventh Generation
Shizen and Tataki Restaurants
Sierra Club California
Sierra Nevada Brewing Co.
Super Cocina
Surfrider Foundation
Sustain LA
Sustainable St. Helena
TechNet
The Bay Foundation
The Last Plastic Straw
The Nature Conservancy
The Nectary
The Refill Shoppe
The Story of Stuff Project
The Trust for Public Land
Town of San Anselmo
Tracy Delta Solid Waste Management, Inc.
UberEATS
Vision Recycling
Wisdom Supply Co.
Zanker Recycling
Zero Waste Sonoma
350 Humboldt: Grassroots Climate Action
350 Silicon Valley
350 South Bay Los Angeles
350 Southland Legislative Alliance

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