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US Mayors resolve to shift packaging-waste burden to producers

By -- *Packaging Digest*, June 14, 2010

The U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM) has adopted a resolution calling for state and federal producer responsibility legislation that shifts the costs of managing problematic product and packaging waste away from taxpayers and local governments to producers and the consumers of their products. The USCM resolution is based on a model developed by the Product Policy Institute (PPI) that has been adopted by 95 local jurisdictions and local government associations in California since 2006, as well as by jurisdictions in New York, Massachusetts, Minnesota and Texas. USCM is the third national association of elected officials to adopt resolutions to address the growing, expensive problem of managing consumer product waste – part of a larger movement sweeping the nation.

“Product Policy Institute has been working with governments for seven years to find solutions to the mounting burden of product and packaging waste facing communities,” said Product Policy Institute Executive Director Bill Sheehan. “Today the U.S. Conference of Mayors planted their flag in the waste pile and said, “no more.” They asked product manufacturers to take primary responsibility for their toxic and non-recyclable products. We’re proud of their leadership on this pressing issue.”



USCM is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more, promoting effective national urban/suburban policy. The USCM resolution supports state and federal producer responsibility legislation that levels the playing field for corporations that take “cradle-to-cradle” responsibility for their products and packaging, and urges Congress support the ability of state governments to establish producer responsibility legislation.

The USCM resolution lead sponsor is Mayor Christopher Cabaldon of West Sacramento, California - whose city adopted a similar resolution in 2009. Mayor Mike McGinn of Seattle, Washington is a co-sponsor. The resolution is signed by Mayor Patrick Hays of North Little Rock, AR; Mayor David Maher of Cambridge, MA; Mayor Mark Burroughs of Denton, TX; and Mayor Kevin Johnson of Sacramento, CA.

“Local governments are in serious financial trouble and can better use resources currently going to manage waste products like batteries, needles and fluorescent lamps to fund police, fire and basic public health services,” said Mayor Cabaldon. “We need manufacturers to take responsibility for what they make, not leave it to the taxpayers and ratepayers to clean-up the mess at very high costs.

National associations of elected officials representing cities and counties have already adopted producer responsibility resolutions. The National League of Cities and the National Association of Counties both adopted resolutions last year.

The resolutions are part of a movement that calls for Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), also known as Product Stewardship. EPR is a policy approach common in Europe, Japan, Canada and other industrialized nations but relatively new to the United States. In the US, 23 states now have laws for discarded electronic products that require producers to finance or manage collection and provide responsible recycling.

“We cannot continue to expect government and taxpayers to design, fund and manage every product sold, said Heidi Sanborn, Executive Director of the California Product Stewardship Council. “Taxpayers and garbage ratepayers have hit their limit and so have our landfills! Requiring producers of problem products like batteries and fluorescent lamps pay for their recovery, utilizes free-market competitive forces to drive down recycling costs and creates jobs in the private sector, not in the public sector.”

Product Policy Institute has been leading the producer responsibility movement by conducting research and education on product stewardship, and by helping local and state government officials and other stakeholders like national associations work collaboratively towards this policy approach. PPI helped local governments organize Product Stewardship Councils in California, Texas, New York, Massachusetts and Vermont; the Councils serve as hubs that bring together all stakeholders to develop sustainable solutions based on the clear framework principles.

SOURCE: *Product Policy Institute*

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