



Legislation Summary:

An Act to reduce waste and recycling costs in the Commonwealth

Initial bill number(s): [S.471](#) (Bill numbers will change as legislation proceeds.)

Sponsors: Senator Sal DiDomenico

What the bill does, why LWVMA supports or opposes it, and the League position relative to this bill.

S.471 establishes a framework of producer responsibility requiring producers to develop and implement a comprehensive, incremental, DEP approved program to reduce and recycle covered materials by 90% by 2040.

Such producer responsibility programs established in other states & countries have demonstrated that when producers pay the cost of collection and disposal, they are incentivized to use more sustainable packaging materials thereby reducing the environmental impact of extraction, production, transport and disposal of materials, in addition to saving municipalities and the public the ever-increasing cost of waste management.

Producer plans must be approved by the Mass Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) as meeting MassDEP requirements. MassDEP will enforce compliance of the plans.

Fees will be established by MassDEP based on types of materials produced with fees set to fully reimburse residential, school and small commercial waste collection costs. The fee structure will incentivize reduction, reuse and recyclability of materials; use of less toxic materials; domestic processing of materials to support local infrastructure.

Why LWVMA Supports this bill:

While this summary relates specifically to paper and packaging materials, the League supports the underlying principle of extended producer responsibility in other bills such as those for paint, mattresses, and electronics as well. Our focus is on reducing the increasing levels of waste from packaging, levels that are unsustainable and burdensome to residents, municipalities and institutional and commercial generators (e.g. large scale operations such as schools, nursing homes, apartments, etc.) that bear the full cost of handling and disposal of these materials. The data show that, even for materials that are recyclable, we are generating far more waste than can be managed profitably by municipal recycling facilities because many materials labeled as

recyclable are not in our current system. Paper and packaging constitute 46% of Massachusetts' disposed and recycled municipal solid waste.

As a state and as a nation, the focus for decades has been on recycling rather than waste reduction, the first "R" in the Reduce, Reuse, Recycle mantra. Waste generation presents a growing, negative impact on our pocketbooks, disposal capacity, environment and health, with negative impacts of environmental pollution greater for environmental justice and overburdened communities. In addition to bearing the full cost of processing and disposal of waste, taxpayers and municipalities also bear the social cost of environmental pollution on our health and environment, which is generally not accounted for in 'up front' costs of disposal.

LWV Position relevant to support of this bill:

From 2022-2024 LWV Impact on Issues: Waste Management

Waste Management, p. 99

The League supports:

- Policies to reduce the generation and promote the reuse and recycling of solid and hazardous wastes.
- Policies to ensure safe treatment, transportation, storage, and disposal of solid and hazardous wastes in order to protect public health and air, water, and land resources.
- Planning and decision-making processes that recognize suitable solid and hazardous waste as potential resources.