

## Climate Change

Reduce and recycle single-use plastics

[AB 1080 \(Gonzalez, Calderon, Friedman, and Ting\): California Circular Economy and Plastic Pollution Reduction Act](#)

[SB 54 \(Allen, Skinner, Stern, and Wiener\): California Circular Economy and Plastic Pollution Reduction Act](#)

Complications and challenges come from the plastics industry, their allies in fossil fuel production and processing, toy and bottled water manufacturers, and chambers of commerce. Two complications being worked out are expectations for recycling in a dynamic recycling marketplace (this is straightforward, compostability and transition away from single use plastics are the alternative here), and some concern about the "75% of what baseline" problem.

### Background

Roughly two-thirds of all plastic ever produced has been released into the natural environment and remains there in some form, polluting our landfills, streets, parks, and waterways. Plastic breaks down into smaller particles, known as microplastics, causing toxic chemicals and contaminants to concentrate within our food and water supplies. Exposure to these toxins has been linked to serious health problems, including cancer, birth defects, impaired immunity, and endocrine disruption. Furthermore, plastics harm marine ecosystems and endanger wildlife, including seabirds, turtles, dolphins, and whales who can die from ingestion and entanglement. By volume, plastic materials are by far the largest element of preventable consumer waste and ocean debris. It is estimated that by 2050, there will more plastic in the ocean than there are fish.

Unfortunately, existing recycling infrastructure cannot keep pace with the continued exponential growth of single use waste. It is more expensive to recycle plastic than it is to deposit plastic in landfills. Experts agree that reducing single use waste is the most effective and least expensive way to protect the environment.

### Legislative Summary

The California Circular Economy and Plastic Pollution Reduction Act (AB 1080/SB 54) requires the California Department of Resources, Recycling, and Recovery (CalRecycle) to adopt regulations requiring manufacturers and retailers of single-use packaging and priority single-use plastic products to reduce production of these products and ensure that these products are

recyclable or compostable. These regulations must achieve a 75% reduction in single-use packaging and single-use plastic products by 2030. Costs are estimated in the low millions of dollars for CalRecycle, the agency of note, to develop a scoping plan and analytical tools for measuring results.

### **Jewish Values**

The Talmudic concept of *bal tashchit*, "do not destroy," was developed by the rabbis into a universal doctrine that dramatically asserted God's ownership of the land. Psalm 24 notes, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." From this basic concept, it follows that any act of destruction is an offense against the property of God. Additionally, when God created the first human beings, God led them around the Garden of Eden and said, "Take care not to spoil or destroy My world, for if you do, there will be no one to repair it after you" (Midrash Ecclesiastes Rabbah 7:13). This teaching reminds us that ultimately, the Earth belongs to God and it is our job to be protectors of all of God's creations.

### **Legislative Progress as of August 11, 2019**

AB-1080 has passed the Assembly and the Senate Environmental Quality Committee. It is now before the Senate Appropriations Committee and expected to be heard on August 19. SB-54 has passed the Senate and the Assembly Environmental Quality Committee. It is now before the Assembly Appropriations Committee.