

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE APPROVES COUNTRY'S STRONGEST PROTECTIONS AGAINST DECEPTIVE RECYCLING CLAIMS

Proposed Law Reserves 'Chasing Arrows' Recycling Symbol for Truly Recyclable Products and Packaging

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SACRAMENTO - The California Legislature has passed [Senate Bill 343](#), a proposed law to reserve the familiar “chasing arrows” recycling symbol for products and packaging that are truly recyclable. The measure, authored by longtime recycling and circular economy champion Senator Ben Allen (D-Santa Monica), would prohibit manufacturers from placing the symbol on items that are destined for landfills.

Although the measure faced strong opposition from plastic, battery, and other product manufacturers, this week it earned strong bipartisan support, with votes from both Republicans and Democrats. The bill next goes to the Governor’s Desk.

“It’s already illegal to label an item ‘recyclable’ when it’s really not,” said Senator Allen. “So manufacturers shouldn’t be able to put the recycling symbol on items that aren’t actually recyclable in the real world. By forcing truth in labelling, SB 343 will reduce contamination in the recycling stream and improve the sorting process, thereby saving cities and ratepayers money while empowering consumers to make more informed decisions.”

Companies know that consumers believe the “chasing arrows” symbol means that an item goes into the recycling bin. A [Consumer Brands Association report](#) found that recycling was more confusing to consumers than doing taxes, and 68 percent of people believe that the “chasing arrows” symbol means that an item is recyclable. In addition, according to [the 2021 report by the Statewide Commission on Recycling Markets and Curbside Recycling](#), “[s]ince consumers equate the 'recycle' word and symbol with what is accepted in curbside recycling bins, the 'recycle' word and symbol must be reserved for materials which are accepted in curbside bins and do not cause contamination.”

Right now, local governments -- and therefore ratepayers -- pay the price for these misleading labels. A [recent investigation by CalMatters](#) found that recycling facilities must spend time sorting out the non-recyclables, which slows down recycling system processes and increases costs.

“Consumers want to recycle correctly, which is why they dutifully look at labels and place everything with a chasing arrows symbol into the recycling bin -- even products that will just get sorted back out and disposed into a landfill. The state owes it to consumers to make sure that the symbol they associate with



being recyclable actually means what they think it does,” said Heidi Sanborn, Executive Director of the [National Stewardship Action Council](#), a co-sponsor of the measure. “SB 343 requires truthful labeling and ends confusion.”

“Manufacturers have been able to lie to consumers for far too long, and this bill will finally hold them accountable for actually making their products recyclable” said Nick Lapis, the Director of Advocacy for [Californians Against Waste](#). “SB 343 is a huge win for consumers, for the environment, for all the companies that have invested in closing the loop on the products that they make.”

SB 343 is one of several bills in the Circular Economy package that the Legislature is considering to increase transparency and consumer confidence in the recycling system, including [AB 962](#) (Kamlager) to allow easier reuse of glass bottles by brewers, [AB 1201](#) (Ting) to update labeling for compostable products, and [AB 1276](#) (Carrillo) to require that single-use foodware be provided with takeout food only upon customer request. [AB 881](#) (Gonzalez), which would prohibit plastic waste exports to other countries being counted as being “recycled,” has already been sent to the Governor’s desk.

The Governor has until October 10, 2021 to sign SB 343 and other Circular Economy measures into law. Even if the recall is successful on September 14, Governor Newsom would continue to serve until at least September 30 and likely through October 10 depending on the date of election certification.

For more information and a list of supporters, please see the [SB 343 fact sheet](#).

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