



ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF INCREASING RECYCLING IN COLORADO



PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY FOR CONTAINERS,
PACKAGING, AND PRINTED PAPER

Sponsors: Representative Lisa Cutter; Senator Kevin Priola and Senator Julie Gonzales

THE PROBLEM Colorado's low recycling rate is a tremendous lost opportunity to create jobs and boost local economies.

COLORADO HAS ONE OF THE LOWEST RECYCLING RATES IN THE US

Colorado recycles and composts just [15% of its discards](#)—that's less than half the national recycling rate. [Ninety-five percent of Colorado's waste](#) could be diverted from landfills and could serve as the feedstock for businesses in the state to make new products.

OVER \$100 MILLION IN LOST VALUE BURIED IN COLORADO LANDFILLS

Much of what Colorado buries in landfills has value and could have been sold in recycling commodity markets. The paper, plastics, and other commodities buried in Colorado landfills each year could have been [sold for recycling for over \\$100 million](#). This is a huge lost financial opportunity to create jobs and boost local economies.

COLORADO SHIPS MOST RECYCLABLES OUT OF STATE, LOSING MORE VALUE

Colorado lacks local recycling markets for most major recyclable materials. Nearly all of the paper, metal, and plastic that Colorado collects for recycling are shipped out of state before being made into new products. Increasing recycling will attract businesses to Colorado to use recycled materials to make new products.

THE SOLUTION IMPROVE RECYCLING, CREATE JOBS, AND STRENGTHEN SUPPLY CHAINS WITH PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY POLICY.

A Producer Responsibility policy will make it easy for all Coloradans to recycle more plastics, aluminum cans, glass bottles, cardboard, and printed paper. It will also help businesses by creating a more resilient domestic supply of recycled materials to make new products. This will rapidly improve Colorado's recycling rate, create new jobs, and benefit local economies while reducing carbon pollution.

RECYCLING CREATES JOBS IN COLORADO

Recycling, reuse, and re-manufacturing industries already provide nearly [86,000 jobs in Colorado and generate \\$8.7 billion in economic benefits](#) each year, despite our low statewide recycling rate. Increasing our recycling efforts will provide even more jobs and economic benefits—on average, recycling creates [nine times more jobs than landfilling per ton](#).

GROWING RECYCLING NATIONWIDE LEADS TO BILLIONS IN ECONOMIC BENEFITS

By doubling the national recycling rate, the US can realize substantial economic and environmental impacts in the first ten years, including [\\$30.8 billion in economic benefits and 200,000 new jobs](#). Producer Responsibility policies are a proven tool to expand recycling and realize these benefits.

BUSINESSES SUPPORT PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY TO STRENGTHEN SUPPLY CHAINS

Businesses are facing massive disruptions in global supply chains and struggling to source the metal, paper, plastic, and glass needed to make new packaging and products. Meanwhile Colorado [buries over 5.9 million tons](#) of resources in our landfills every year. By recycling more, we can create a reliable domestic supply of materials to make new products. Over 100 global companies have [publicly stated their broad support](#) for producer responsibility policies to increase recycling, reduce plastic pollution, and help strengthen local economies.

HOW PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY WILL HELP GLASS RECYCLING AND COLORADO BUSINESSES

Glass bottles are recycled right here in Colorado and our glass recycling system serves as a model for how closed-loop recycling can create jobs and economic value. Here's how it works:

1. You recycle glass bottles in your curbside recycling bin.
2. Your recycling is picked up and sent to a materials recovery facility (MRF) where the glass is sorted out.
3. The glass is transported to Glass to Glass Denver, where it is cleaned up and sorted by color and size.
4. The cleaned and sorted glass is then sold to local bottling companies: Rocky Mountain Bottle Company in Wheat Ridge and Owens-Illinois in Windsor. There, glass is remanufactured into new glass bottles and are back on store shelves in just a few weeks, ready to repeat the cycle again.

Yet there is one problem: there is not enough glass being recycled. [Less than 25% of glass](#) is collected for recycling statewide, leaving local companies to pay more to import recycled glass from other states. Improving recycling programs in Colorado will directly benefit Colorado manufacturers who use recycled materials while attracting similar businesses to expand in Colorado.

Producer Responsibility in Colorado has strong bipartisan support from local governments, consumer goods companies, recycling businesses, environmental groups, and many more. For more information, please contact:

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