



Oregon
Environmental
Council



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Our country has a waste problem. Natural resources are continually extracted to produce goods that are used – often just once – before they are thrown into landfills, incinerators or the natural environment. This system of consumption and disposal results in the waste of precious resources and in pollution that threatens our health, environment and the global climate. Additionally, chemical migration of toxic chemicals from food packaging and containers can make their way into our food and drink, increasing the chances of cancer, endocrine disruption, and fertility issues.

To protect public health and the environment, conserve natural resources and landscapes, and help address the climate crisis, the Oregon legislature can build on its legacy of environmental stewardship in 2023 by:

Phasing out polystyrene foodware and PFAS in food packaging (SB 543)

One of the most egregious single-use plastics is polystyrene, more commonly known as Styrofoam, which is typically not reused, is not accepted in curbside recycling and is one of the top items found polluting Oregon's beaches. A proposed bill would ban polystyrene foodware, coolers and packing peanuts, as well as phasing out PFAS, a toxic "forever chemical," from food packaging, which has been linked to thyroid, kidney, and ovarian cancers.

Reducing plastic at the source (SB 544)

This proposed bill requires producers to reduce the amount of single-use plastic packaging and foodware by 25% over the next decade. If your bathtub is overflowing, you wouldn't start by bailing out the water, you'd start by turning off the tap. We need to turn off the plastic tap and reduce the amount of single-use plastics entering the market in the first place, resulting in less plastic production, less greenhouse gas emissions, and less pollution.

Legalizing reusables (SB 545)

Many shoppers, and even some businesses, are not aware that Oregon's Health Code does not allow for consumer or store-owned reusable containers to be used in bulk sections or for produce. A proposed bill would establish "legal" reuse systems and opportunities under Oregon's Health Code for consumers and businesses alike to transition away from harmful single-use items.

Giving Oregonians the right to repair (SB 542)

We generate way too much waste, and companies use their power in the marketplace to make things harder to repair, locking us into buying more and more. This only adds to the amount of waste going to toxic landfills. A proposed bill would give every Oregonian and every small business access to the parts, tools, and service information they need to repair products. This will allow more people to have affordable access to technology and reduce equity barriers for low-income households, protect consumers by allowing them to fully own their own product, and boost small businesses like small independent repair shops that are part of our Main Street business economy.

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