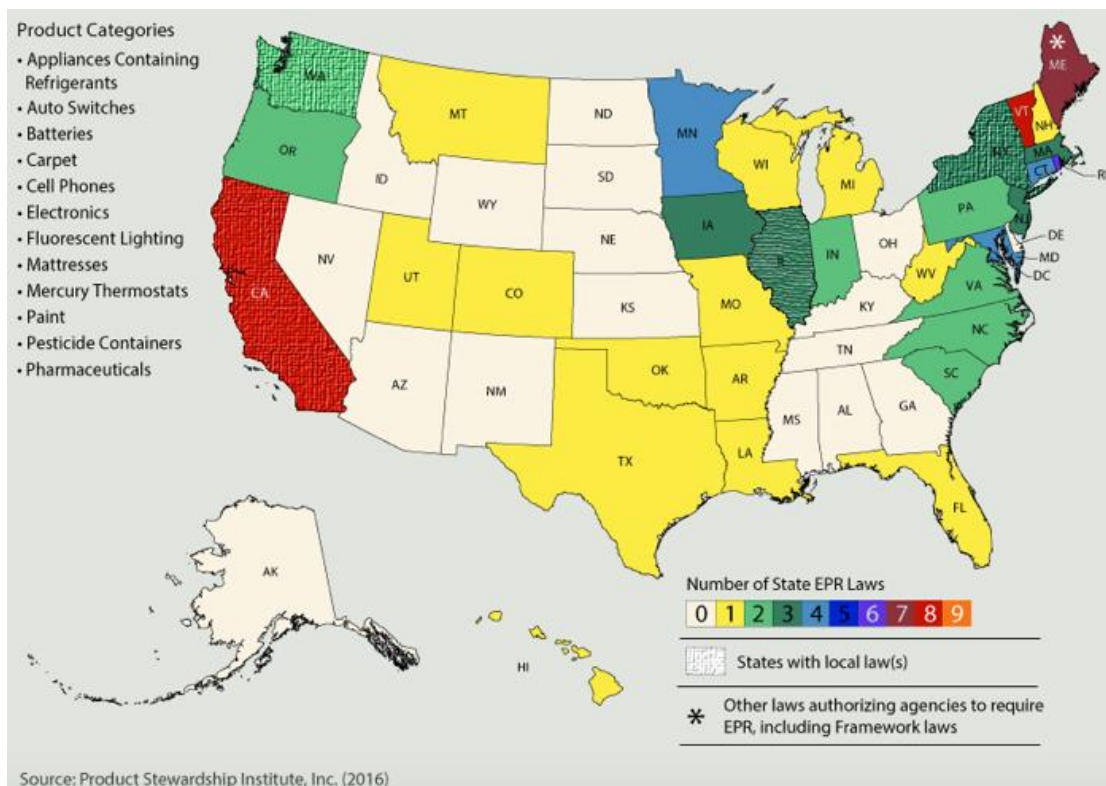


Do Extended Producer Responsibility Laws Work?

February 1, 2017 by Jessica Lyons Hardcastle



Manufacturers in [more than 30 states](#) and even some local jurisdictions must fund and manage [recycling](#) and disposal for their products under extended producer responsibility (EPR), or product stewardship laws.

These include [paint](#), [carpet](#), [electronics and batteries](#), [pharmaceuticals and medical waste](#), [fluorescent lighting](#), [thermostats and mattresses](#). California is even considering an [EPR system to reduce packaging waste](#).

But do these laws make good on their promises to divert waste from landfills and increase recycling rates while also saving money and creating recycling jobs?

A statewide [evaluation](#) examining the environmental and economic impacts of Connecticut's four EPR laws for paint, mattresses, mercury thermostats and electronics, released by the Product Stewardship Institute, says yes.

The Product Stewardship Institute works with states and industry to develop EPR laws. Its new report finds these four programs have diverted 26 million pounds of material, saved Connecticut municipalities and taxpayers more than \$2.6 million per year, provided additional services worth another \$6.7 million, and created more than 100 jobs.

Funded by the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Quality, the study shows how these programs contribute to the state's environmental goals. For instance, the mandatory thermostat collection program plays a critical role in diverting mercury, a toxic material. Connecticut's mercury recovery rate has increased from an average of 17 pounds annually to 27 pounds annually under the program.

And due to increased mattress recycling, the state achieved greenhouse gas emissions savings of 4.2 million kilograms of carbon equivalent in 2016.

"While each program comes with its own set of successes and challenges, all of Connecticut's EPR programs have reduced waste, increased recycling, saved taxpayers money, and created recycling jobs," said Scott Cassel, CEO and founder of PSI in a statement. "The most effective programs — like the paint program — were put in place by model laws created through collaboration between governments, industry, and other stakeholders."

The paint program recovered 51 percent (or over 320,000 gallons) of all leftover paint generated in the state in 2016. The high collection rate can be partly attributed to an increase in the number of collection sites: in 2011, the state had only 8 paint recycling locations; by the second year of the program (2015), residents had access to 140 sites.

Connecticut's paint law is directly based on a national model EPR program mediated by PSI with the paint industry, state and local governments, the EPA, recyclers, and other stakeholders. The resulting eco-fee financing mechanism, key to the national agreement, is the first product stewardship system in the U.S. that is consumer-funded but industry-managed.

Connecticut's EPR programs also offer cost savings for taxpayers and local governments, the report says. For example, in 2014 alone, the electronics program reduced municipal disposal costs by more than \$528,000, not including avoided disposal costs. In addition to those savings, the program provided financial benefits in the form of no-cost recycling services worth an additional \$4.4 million.