



Assembly Bill 1276: Skip the Stuff - Reduce Unnecessary Food Serviceware

SUMMARY

AB 1276 will build on California's existing efforts to combat waste from single-use items. Providing food and beverage accessories only upon request to customers, and requiring reusable food service ware for specified on-site dining (as proposed to be amended,) will significantly reduce unnecessary waste and save businesses and local governments money.

BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM

Every year in the United States, an estimated 561 billion disposable foodware items are used, resulting in a whopping 4.9 million tons of waste. Unused food accessories including utensils, straws, napkins, condiment packages, and otherwise clog landfills, complicate recycling, and pollute streets and waterways in our communities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased takeout and food delivery, which restaurants are relying upon to stay afloat. The use of disposable food accessories has contributed to a 250-300% increase in single-use plastics and a 30% increase in waste. Currently, many food facilities and food delivery services provide single-use food and beverage accessories regardless of whether or not they are needed. Most customers do not want them or have reusable items at home or in their offices, so these accessories are usually discarded without being used. Furthermore, global health experts

and U.S. health officials agree that there's no evidence that covid can spread through food or food packaging.

Restaurants in the U.S. spend \$19 billion purchasing disposable foodware items. California restaurants that have voluntarily made the transition to a combination of by request and reusable foodware have been proven to save between \$3,000 and \$21,000 per year, while reducing waste and greenhouse gas emissions. Additionally, reuse creates as many as 30 times more jobs than landfills.

Local governments and taxpayers spend over \$428 million annually in ongoing efforts to clean up and prevent litter in streets, storm drains, parks and waterways. Additionally, California recyclers are now faced with a worsened crisis, as the vast majority of these non-recyclable single-use food accessories debase recycling systems and can contaminate many commercial compost facilities. This adds costs to collection, sorting, processing and disposal for cities and ratepayers.

Many of these food accessories are made of plastic, and the increasing surge in plastic use exacerbates health risks predominantly in communities of color and/or low-income communities. The production of plastic emits greenhouse gases and harms communities near oil refineries, plastic production facilities, and landfills or incinerators. Steps must be taken to protect the public health of these communities.

SOLUTION

In order to address this issue, AB 1276 expands the plastic straws upon request law to include other single-use food accessories, other food facilities, and third party delivery platforms - including food that is taken away, delivered, or served on-site. Additionally, for specified restaurants, reusable food serviceware is required for on-site dining (as proposed to be amended.)

Source reduction is by far the most efficient and cost-effective way to protect resources and communities, and help California reach its waste diversion and [climate](#) goals. Reducing unnecessary food serviceware is a simple solution and a win-win for reducing waste in the first place, saving businesses money, and relieving recyclers, composters and local governments from the complications and costs associated with it.

SUPPORT

Clean Seas Lobbying Coalition (Sponsor)

OPPOSITION

None.

STAFF CONTACT

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