

**Testimony to the  
Pennsylvania House of Representatives  
Tourism and Recreational Development Committee  
House Bill No. 304  
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**The Professional Recyclers of Pennsylvania**

The Professional Recyclers of Pennsylvania (PROP) is a non-profit organization of nearly 350 members representing nearly 1,000 recycling programs in the Commonwealth. Our membership includes both public and private sector recycling professionals, attracting members from business, local and county government, and the waste and recycling industry. PROP is Pennsylvania's affiliate to the National Recycling Coalition and an Advisory Member of the Northeast Recycling Council.

We have had positive and cooperative relationships with the Pennsylvania Chapter of the Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA), the state's grassroots anti-dumping organization, PA ClearWays, and have worked on several projects with the Pennsylvania Resources Council (PRC), the Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC), and the Pennsylvania Composting Association (PACA). We believe that these ongoing relationships and the many projects undertaken by PROP further enhance our role as a unified voice for recycling and solid waste professionals and advocates in Pennsylvania.

**Historic Perspectives of Act 101 and Recycling**

More than a decade ago, a well crafted piece of legislation won overwhelming bipartisan support and Act 101 became law. Though, in retrospect, we might like to change a few of the details, the legislation is fundamentally sound. The results prove the point. The Commonwealth recycling diversion rate jumped from 2% to 26% in the first ten years of the program. PROP and its members are particularly proud to have been part of this success.

Our collective efforts have fundamentally changed the behavior of millions of Pennsylvanians. Recycling has become second nature to a large majority of our state. Many counties have seen ten-fold increases in recycling. Not since World War II have we seen such a groundswell of support for resource recovery. Business and industry see an opportunity to save both resources and money. The public sees this as an opportunity to help solve a set of problems that they helped create.

This has not only been a very popular and successful program at home; it has become part of our work day as well. We need look no further than the Capital itself to prove this point. So it only makes sense to make recycling available everywhere that people gather. It is with enthusiasm, then, that PROP supports the establishment or enhancement of recycling programs in public places like stadiums, convention centers, and other arenas.

Though recycling in these settings is already required by many municipal ordinances, public area recycling of any kind is challenging. Because of its challenging nature, it is often ignored, even if it is required. Yet when program administrators pay attention to detail, there are many public settings where recycling does work and works well.

A number of festivals, fairs, and sporting events throughout the Commonwealth have managed to capture significant amounts of waste for recycling. The most famous of these efforts is Penn State's Beaver Stadium, which has been recognized nationally for their comprehensive recycling program. Though not as famous or in the same order of magnitude as Beaver Stadium, there are perhaps several hundred smaller events and venues enjoying similar levels of success.

### **The Challenges**

Yet many facility managers may see additional requirements as an operational liability. Managers fear that these requirements will overwhelm their staff and add exorbitant costs to their operations. PROP has found, however, that these challenges have not proven to be overly burdensome to schools or other institutions confronted with similar implementation issues. This should not be a roadblock to establishing or enhancing programs.

Beyond the many logistical challenges that discourage recycling, a number of important facilities and institutions are also situated outside mandated recycling communities. One such example can be found in the middle of PROP's home county, as Altoona's recently completed convention center sets about a half mile outside the nearest mandated community.

When a facility does try to provide public recycling, they must frequently battle contamination, public apathy, pessimistic custodial staffs, challenging transportation of materials, or difficult markets. These issues confront every program administrator and facility or event manager to varying degrees. Yet why do some succeed and others fail?

- **Well labeled, strategically placed receptacles must be convenient for attendees.** That means that a well-marked container must be next to nearly every waste receptacle.
- **Everyone must be educated about the benefits and ease of recycling.** Success comes most easily to those that publicize their recycling programs and continually educate the public, their professional staff, and their custodial help.
- **Managers and staff must plan their program and continue to fine tune the details,** learning from past mistakes and ongoing struggles.

### **Pennsylvania Wants to Recycle**

Pennsylvanians overwhelmingly support recycling and actively participate in recycling programs in their communities according to a survey commissioned two and a half years ago by the Joint Legislative Air and Water Pollution Control and Conservation Committee. So when given the choice in a public setting, most people will do the right thing. Unfortunately, many facilities follow the path of least resistance, ignoring recycling all together.

Many others make only a passing stab at it to satisfy the local government recycling coordinator or an outspoken member of the public.

Comprehensive recycling programs in these public settings is the next logical step in a progression of waste management initiatives in “recreational facilities”. No facilities manager would dream of dumping his trash in the street, throwing it into the nearest stream, or setting fire to it. In a similar way, it should be equally unacceptable to ignore recycling.

### **Some Suggestions**

If the bill continues to move through the committee process, we would offer several suggestions to help improve the chances that the programs will work and recycling will increase.

- Include plastic bottles in the list of required materials. This makes up an ever-increasing portion of the beverage container waste stream and should not be ignored.
- The bill should also encourage or require the recycling of corrugated cardboard and high grade paper from facility and food service operations, especially since some facilities are not in mandated recycling communities.
- Require that containers have specialized openings, clear labels, and be placed next to waste receptacles.
- Consider lowering the minimum seating requirement in the bill to 1,000. If we are going to mandate that these facilities recycle, it seems reasonable to require modest sized facilities to provide the same recycling opportunities.

### **Making it Work**

This will not always be an easy road. But the Professional Recyclers of Pennsylvania offer every bit of assistance that we and our members can provide. “Recycling Works” almost everywhere in the state. With this legislation, we hope to help make it work in one more setting.

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