



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senate unanimously approves O'Mara's paint recycling legislation: O'Mara, state Association of Counties continue to call it important mandate relief action for local governments and taxpayers

THOMAS F. O'MARA May 17, 2017

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Albany, N.Y., May 17—The New York State Senate today unanimously approved legislation sponsored by Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats), chairman of the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee, to establish an industry-sponsored "Paint Stewardship Program" to reduce a costly burden on local governments and local taxpayers currently responsible for collecting and disposing of most post-consumer paint.

This marks the third consecutive year the Senate has approved the legislation (**S.881/A.1038**). The measure is sponsored by Assemblyman Al Stirpe (D-Syracuse) but it has not been moved out of the Assembly Environmental Conservation Committee.

O'Mara and the New York State Association of Counties, among other supporters, have criticized the Assembly leadership's refusal to act on the important environmental and mandate relief legislation so that Governor Andrew Cuomo can sign it into law. O'Mara said that the legislation would create local jobs, provide fiscal relief to local property taxpayers, and encourage environmentally sound recycling and disposal of unused paint in New York State.

He pointed to the legislation as an example of how government and industry can work together to implement effective environmental policies and programs.

"This legislation exemplifies how much we can accomplish by working together with industry on important environmental concerns. Seeking common ground and cooperation, rather than government cramming unreasonable demands down the throat of industry, can help give New York State a more business friendly environment and actually result in better, more workable laws," O'Mara said. "Working together will go a long ways on reaching an end result on other important issues that would benefit our state fiscally, economically and environmentally."

In a **memorandum of support for the legislation**, NYSAC states, “nearly four million gallons of leftover paint are generated annually in New York State. Most leftover paint is currently disposed in the garbage despite the efforts of local governments, which spend millions of dollars annually to collect and manage a small fraction of this unwanted paint through the household hazardous waste collection programs. This bill is closely aligned with amendments counties have requested to the New York state Electronic Equipment Recycling and Reuse Act, by requiring manufacturers to take the responsibility off of local governments and placing it on those who generate the leftover paint.”

The **New York League of Conservation Voters** notes in its own memorandum of support that the law would “divert hazardous paint from the state’s landfills and ease a financial burden on localities who are responsible for proper paint disposal. Product stewardship laws create safe and environmentally friendly processes to dispose of or recycle hazardous products such as batteries, electronics, and pharmaceuticals.”

The national **Product Stewardship Institute (PSI)** estimates that nearly 4 million gallons of paint go unused each year in New York State -- with the costs of collecting and managing the paint’s disposal mostly falling on local governments. Under O’Mara’s legislation, through which paint manufacturers would be responsible for managing the recycling and disposal of unused paint, local governments would save upwards of \$30 million annually.

Paint stewardship laws have been enacted in eight states (California, Colorado, Connecticut, Maine, Minnesota, Oregon, Rhode Island and Vermont) and Washington D.C. According to the PSI, these laws have already resulted in more than \$69 million in taxpayer savings, created over 200 jobs, and led to the recycling of over 17 million gallons of high quality paint (a majority of which is recycled back into paint).

The measure has consistently drawn the support of a range of environmental advocacy organizations, paint industry representatives, and municipal agencies, including the: Onondaga County Resource Recovery Agency; Madison County Department of Solid Waste & Sanitation; American Coatings Association; New York Product Stewardship Council; Citizens Campaign for the Environment; and the National Resources Defense Council. The joint, bipartisan New York State Caucus of Environmental Legislators has also cited it as a priority action.

In addition to reduced costs on local taxpayers, O'Mara said, a Paint Stewardship Program will create convenient recycling opportunities and green sector jobs, reduce disposal in favor of recycling, and result in less waste as consumers will become smarter and more efficient shoppers for paint.