Association of State and Territorial Solid Waste Management Officials: 2026 Recycling Position Paper Issued



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The Association of State and Territorial Solid Waste Management Officials ("ASTSWMO") issued a *2026 Recycling Position Paper* ("Position Paper").

The Position Paper was approved by the ASTSWMO Board on March 11th.

ASTSWMO describes itself as an organization:

… representing the 50 States, 5 Territories and the District of Columbia whose mission is to enhance and promote effective State and Territorial programs and to affect relevant national policies for waste and materials management, environmentally sustainable practices, and environmental restoration.

As an introduction, the Position Paper notes in part:

- Global municipal solid waste generation will grow from 2.1 billion metric tons in 2023 to 3.8 billion metric tons by 2050.
- The Resource Conservation and Recovery Act ("RCRA") places a strong emphasis on resource conservation, recovery, and recycling of solid wastes (i.e., disposal should not be treated as an inevitability for materials that have alternative environmental and economically sound options).
- United States materials management strategies are fragmented and rely on local governments to fund and enforce, without continued and consistent advocacy for sustainable measures, valuable resources are lost, and adverse impacts to society, the environment, and the global economy compound.
- ASTSWMO has previously identified needed improvements to the existing recycling infrastructure to domestically manage recyclable materials in the U.S., along with additional infrastructure to meet quality standards for domestic manufacturing; additional, consistent, and ongoing public education and outreach about recycling; and enhanced measurement and data.
- The United States Environmental Protection Agency ("EPA") Solid Waste Infrastructure and Recycling ("SWIFR") and Consumer Recycling and Education Outreach ("REO") grant programs address these needs by supporting activities to improve the infrastructure for recycling, data collection, implementation of State-led plans to advance postconsumer materials management, and recycling education and outreach.

Recycling infrastructure funding through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act ("IIJA") provided grants to implement waste management and recycling programs. A referenced strategy supports a National Recycling Goal to increase the recycling rate to 50 percent by 2030. Five strategic objectives to create a more resilient and cost-effective national recycling system include:

- Improve Markets for Recycling Commodities.
- Increase Collection and Improve Materials Management Infrastructure.
- Reduce Contamination in the Recycled Materials Stream.
- Enhance Policies to Support Recycling.
- Standardize Measurement and Increase Data Collection.

The Position Paper discusses the utilization by the 56 eligible States, Territories, and the District of Columbia the use of SWIFR State and Territorial grants and their role in the increasing in recycling and diverting waste from landfills. Examples of how such grant programs are supporting and advancing the five objectives include:

- Improve markets for recycling commodities.
- Increase Collection and Improve Materials Management Infrastructure.
- Reduce Contamination in the Recycled Materials Stream.
- Enhance Policies to Support Recycling.
- Standardize Measurement and Increase Data Collection.

ASTSWMO recommends that EPA take any necessary steps to continue providing investments for infrastructure and education through sustained SWIFR and REO grant funding.

A copy of the Position Paper can be found here.