



Contacts:

Monica Wilson, Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives
Research & Policy Coordinator, 510-883-9490 x103, monica@no-burn.org

Thomas Helme, Valley Improvement Projects
Environmental Justice Advocate, (209)589-9277, valleyimprovementprojects@gmail.com

Nick Lapis, Californians Against Waste
Director of Advocacy, (916) 443-5422 nicklapis@cawrecycles.org

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GOVERNOR BROWN SIGNS CARPET LEGISLATION - IMPACTED COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENTALISTS CLAIM VICTORY IN FIGHT TO STOP INCINERATION

Reform of the World's Only Mandatory Carpet Recycling Program Signals an end to Burning Up Valuable Resources

(SACRAMENTO) – Governor Jerry Brown signed AB 1158 (Chu) into law today. The bill strengthens the 2010 California Carpet Stewardship Act, the only law in the world that requires the carpet industry to establish a take-back and recycling program for carpet waste.

Reform was badly needed since in the first five years of implementation, the industry-run program achieved only a 3% increase in recycling of carpet discards. A similar increase in the quantity of carpet burned in cement kilns, “waste to energy” incinerators, and industrial facilities was a cause for alarm by communities living near these facilities, since burning carpet releases dioxins, fine particulates, and other health threatening chemicals. The reformed program no longer encourages the incineration and energy transformation of carpet waste under the guise of “landfill diversion.”

Monica Wilson from GAIA, a network supporting alternatives to incineration, said “We applaud the fact that this bill prohibits consumer fees from being used to subsidize incineration and we are glad that the bill clearly directs CalRecycle to prioritize reducing and recycling waste over burning and landfilling it. This means that future industry plans for managing carpet waste should not include incineration in any form.”

The bill also increased the carpet recycling rate requirement from 16% to 24% by 2020, and allows CalRecycle to set future recycling targets after 2020. The industry is now required to submit a new plan to the state agency CalRecycle in October 2017.

“This bill provides a badly needed legislative fix for the California Carpet Stewardship Act, and will finally provide consumers the real recycling that they have been paying for. Carpet is one of the typical bulky items sent to landfill and incineration, but if designed to be less toxic and made from plastics that can be recycled, carpet waste could be recycled back into carpet in a closed loop system” said Nick Lapis, Legislative Director for Californians Against Waste. “The existing industry-run take-back program has been determined to be out of compliance for three consecutive years in a row, resulting in 3 million dollars



of fines and penalties. Carpet manufacturers need to get serious about increasing collection, funding recycling, and designing carpet that can be more easily recycled.”

“The incinerator in Stanislaus County processes 800 tons of solid waste per day, including carpets. There isn’t a single place to drop off carpet discards for recycling in the county. We hope that in enforcing the carpet stewardship program that CalRecycle ensures that our communities, who are funding this program through consumer fees, have access to recycling and are no longer exposed to toxic emissions from burning carpet” said Thomas Helme, Environmental Justice Advocate for Valley Improvement Projects.

The new program could transform an existing ineffective program for carpet waste into a global model by:

- Including incentives for carpet manufacturers to redesign carpet to increase recyclability;
- Requiring the industry carpet stewardship program to increase their recycling rate;
- Discouraging use of incineration while promoting recycling;
- Restricting use of consumer fees collected to fund recycling and redesign, instead of funding incineration or paying industry costs associated with penalties for noncompliance; and
- Improving consumer, retailer, and installer education and making it easier and more convenient for people to recycle their old carpet.

Community groups and environmentalists are waiting to see whether the state of California will ensure that the goals of the legislation, to promote recycling and recyclability of carpet, will be realized when CalRecycle reviews new plans submitted by the carpet industry to implement a stewardship program by the end of this year.

AB 1158 received bipartisan support by the Senate and Assembly as well as carpet producers like Interface. AB 1158 meets a serious California need:

- [99 percent of carpet is made from plastic](#). Increasing recycling reduces demand for fossil fuels.
- Recycling (as opposed to incineration) reduces the amount of pollution (particulates, heavy metals, dioxins and furans) impacting communities living near incinerators. Over [30 million pounds of carpet was incinerated](#) in California between 2011-2015
- According to CalRecycle, recycling 1,000 square feet of carpet and pad diverts 500 lbs. of carpet and padding out of landfills [and prevents 913 lbs. of CO2](#) from being emitted into our air (the equivalent of 950 miles driven by car)

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