

Statement by Goldman Environmental Prize Recipients to California state government on incineration

April 29, 2014

When we each traveled to California to receive the Goldman Environmental Prize, we learned more about the state's reputation as an environmental leader.

This is why we were especially disappointed to learn that the government of California is considering increasing the dangerous practice of incineration, or so-called "waste to energy," in the state using mass burn, gasification, plasma, cement kilns, and related incineration approaches. Incineration is neither sustainable nor environmentally sound. Instead, it:

- releases toxic pollution
- endangers public health and the environment,
- violates environmental justice, because these polluting facilities both target and operate in low income and communities of color that continue to be disproportionately impacted by pollution,
- worsens climate change,
- wastes valuable resources,
- undermines recycling, reuse, composting, and waste reduction and the jobs created by these approaches, and
- ensures that we have to continue the unsustainable extraction of additional natural resources to replace those we waste by burning.

Many of us have worked on these critical issues, from stopping the practice of incineration of various waste streams, to working towards responsible zero waste systems and the elimination of hazardous wastes.

As a global community, we need to challenge the idea that products and packaging can be "designed for the dump" or "built to be burned." Instead of trying to hide the problem of unrecyclable products and packaging by burning the evidence, we urge California to be a trailblazer once again and take up the critical goal of eliminating products and packaging that are not repairable, reusable, recyclable, or compostable. We also urge you to end subsidies for the three existing incinerators in the state, and move toward eliminating the practice of incineration.

We urge you to reconsider your approach and reject incineration, not only because zero waste alternatives will be better for California's air, economy, health, and environment, but also because of the example California sets for other places in the world. Thank you for your consideration.

Signed by:

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Von Hernandez, Greenpeace Southeast Asia, Philippines, Goldman Environmental Prize Recipient 2003

Yuyun Ismawati, Indonesia Toxics-Free
Network, Indonesia, Goldman
Environmental Prize Recipient 2009

Ricardo Navarro, CESTA, El Salvador,
Goldman Environmental Prize
Recipient 1995

Nohra Padilla, Asociación Cooperativa de
Recicladores de Bogotá, Colombia,
Goldman Environmental Prize
Recipient 2013

Dr. Bobby Peek, groundWork, Friends of the
Earth, South Africa, Goldman
Environmental Prize Recipient 1998

Dr. Olga Speranskaya, Eco-Accord, Russia,
Goldman Environmental Prize
Recipient 2009

Kimberly Wasserman, Little Village
Environmental Justice Organization,
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Recipient 2013

Craig Williams, Chemical Weapons Project,
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