

Producer Responsibility

The Good, The Bad and The Ugly

Good EPR

Positive EPR policies require producers and distributors to take back products and packages that are hard to recycle, or contain toxic elements with no opportunity for adding value. Examples include batteries, medical sharps, mercury switches, artificial turf and paint. Under these regulations, the polluter pays for the final disposal of its products. These regulations have worked well and helped remove products from municipal financial and environmental responsibility.

Bad EPR

Bad EPR policies require take-back of hard to recycle materials and products, but allow for unsustainable end uses such as incineration of mattresses and carpets, or shredding of electronic discards. EPR for electronics, for example, allows original equipment manufacturers to aggregate most of the discards for shredding and prevents social reuse enterprises from gaining access to repairable machines. Electronic discards are the single most valuable commodities in the waste stream. Recovery, repair and resale of machines are critical for both social and economic impacts. Reuse bridges the digital divide and provides skills and good jobs that stabilize families and reduce recidivism. These bad laws allow this high potential opportunity to be removed from communities.

Ugly EPR

The most problematic EPR policies call for beverage industry control of the entire recycling system, removing local government from responsibility, capacity and authority. This eliminates the opportunity for residents and small businesses to impact decision-making at the local level. Mary Lou Van Deventer, co-owner of mission-based recycler Urban Ore, calls this “a hostile take over of a vibrant decentralized industry.” This is a sector that includes recycling activity across hundreds of thousands of businesses and government programs. According to a recent [U.S. EPA report](#), recycling was responsible for an estimated 757,000 jobs, paying \$36.6 billion in wages and \$6.7 billion in tax revenue as of 2007.



OPINION

How to talk about EPR, product stewardship and minimum content policies

Neil Seldman, director of the Institute for Local Self-Reliance's Waste to Wealth initiative, advocates for the use of common terminology in policy discussions around recycling.



<https://www.wastedive.com/news/how-to-talk-about-epr-product-stewardship-minimum-content-ilsr/574600/>

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