



April 24, 2013

Members of the Joint Finance Committee
State Capitol
Madison, WI 53708

RE: Recycling Funding in 2013 - 2015 Budget Bill AB 40

Dear Joint Finance Committee members,

We urge you to restore the \$13 million per year cut that had been made to the Municipal and County Recycling Grant program in the last state budget. The Governor's budget recommends maintaining the 41% cut by funding the program at \$19 million annually rather than the \$32 million funding level of the prior budget.

At a time when Wisconsin is focused on rejuvenating economic growth, it makes more sense than ever to invest in the recovery of valuable resources that feed the economy. The proposed funding level for cost-share of local recycling services is not adequate. Even a \$32 million level still represents less than a third of the net costs of providing residential recycling services. These services are required by State law, and appropriately so, as recycling accrues benefits to the state and public as a whole. The recovery of resources supports jobs and fuels economic activity while conserving our beautiful and productive Wisconsin land through reduced demand for landfill space. The key link to this chain, when it comes to recovering household recyclables, is the presence of convenient collection programs. Thus, state law wisely requires municipalities in Wisconsin to coordinate residential recycling services and provides a cost-share for doing so.

The law has worked relatively well, as Wisconsin's recovery rates traditionally have compared favorably with many other states. The problem now, however, is that the ability of municipalities to sustain effective programs has been jeopardized in the face of slashed funding from the State. The 40% cut reduced the cost-share amount to a level that covers only around 18% of local costs. This development was and remains alarming and threatens to hinder an otherwise successful industry in Wisconsin. Communities responsible for operating "effective recycling programs" under the law cannot provide the recyclable feedstock to sustain and grow the private sector recycling jobs in this state without the means to operate robust collection programs. **Returning to a \$32 million annual funding level would restore confidence to both public and private sector stakeholders alike, who have been forced to factor a questionable state commitment into their decisions about investing in recycling operations in Wisconsin.**

Recycling has been reported to be among the more recession-resistant of industries, outperforming many other sectors in recent years. Of course, recyclables can only support jobs and fuel economic growth when they are captured from the waste stream. According to state estimates, we are still throwing away \$52 million worth of just the landfill banned materials in Wisconsin landfills each year. Lower state cost-share of local recycling programs can only increase that figure of wasted potential as communities, in order to operate within lower budgets, implement reduced recycling and yard waste services for their residents or cut public education and promotion. **For example, in 2011, when a 40% reduction was first forced upon communities in the form of a lapse of recycling funds, Wisconsin recycling programs recovered the lowest annual tonnage of materials in eight years.** Rather than reducing the supply of recyclable feedstock, help us instead to invest in jobs and wise resource use in Wisconsin. In our view, we should start by restoring higher cost-share funding levels for local recycling programs so they can improve their potential to recover and re-circulate resources into the economy. We welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue and any other approaches that may help to grow and protect recycling in Wisconsin. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Endorsing Organizations

Associated Recyclers of Wisconsin is a professional association with members from local government, businesses and non-profit groups that provides statewide proactive leadership on waste reduction and recycling through education, advocacy, collaboration, programs and services.

Contact person: President Meleesa Johnson, Marathon County Solid Waste, 715-446-3101 X104
meleesa.johnson@co.marathon.wi.us

Solid Waste Association of North America- Badger Chapter has more than 200 members in Wisconsin, providing information, training programs, and networking opportunities to solid waste professionals and sharing ideas and solutions to better manage municipal waste.

Contact person: President Chad Doverspike, Brown County Solid Waste, 920-492-4950
Doverspike_cc@co.brown.wi.us

Wisconsin Counties Solid Waste Management Association works with all counties to promote effective and environmentally sound waste management systems and resource recovery efforts.

President: Jeff Beyer, Manitowoc County Public Works, 920-683-4054,
JeffBeyer@co.manitowoc.wi.us

Wisconsin Council on Recycling authorized in s. 287.22 Wis. Stat., consists of industry, business and local government representatives appointed by the Governor to advise the Governor, Legislature and state agencies on solid waste reduction, recovery and recycling policy.

Contact person: Chairman, Rick Meyers, City of Milwaukee Resource Recovery Program Manager, 414-286-2334 Rick.Meyers@milwaukee.gov

CC: Members of AROW, COR, SWANA & WCSWMA; Office of the Governor, Office of the Secretary of the DNR