California and Apple choose the Right To Repair

Last fall, California adopted the nation’s latest statewide Right To Repair law. Thanks to the Right To Repair Act, championed by CALPIRG, Californians will have access to the parts, tools and repair information they need to fix their phones, printers, appliances and other electronic devices when they break.

Shortly thereafter, Apple, maker of the world’s most popular smartphone, announced at a White House event that it would comply with California’s new law nationwide.

“When you buy something, you should be able to do what you want with it. But when it comes to repair, for too long, electronics manufacturers have made it difficult to live by that core principle,” said Jenn Engstrom, state director of CALPIRG.

“We commend Apple for correcting course on Right to Repair. This move by one of the biggest tech companies in the world is a sign that the Right to Repair is an idea whose time has come.” Apple’s actions are a particularly strong sign that the tide is turning in favor of Right To Repair.

CALPIRG’s multi-year campaign for a Right To Repair law, first garnering a favorable Los Angeles Times editorial and unanimous support from the California Senate, helped bring Apple on board in California. And with the support of the Biden administration, Apple has decided to comply with California’s Right To Repair Act nationwide, bringing the benefits of repair access to millions more consumers and helping to keep more of our phones, tablets and other electronics out of landfills.

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The California state Legislature approved the Right to Repair Act with a 39-0 vote in the Senate and 65-1 vote in the Assembly. Senate Bill 244, by state Sen. Susan Talamantes Eggman, would significantly expand consumers’ and independent repair shops’ access to repair materials needed to fix electronics and appliances.

Advocates have been calling for Right to Repair legislation in California for five years. Similar bills have died in the state’s Senate Appropriations Committee the past two years after intense industry lobbying efforts against their passage. But public support for Right to Repair in the state has grown alongside a swell of national momentum. New York, Colorado and Minnesota all passed their own Right to Repair laws in the past year.

“This is a victory for every Californian. We can thank the scrappy group of tinkerers, consumers, environmentalists and small business owners who came together to take on the tech industry and win back the right to fix our own stuff,” said Jenn.

The Right to Repair Act will bring more competition and consumer choice to the repair marketplace, saving Californian households roughly $5 billion per year. Keeping electronics in use longer is also expected to reduce the amount of electronic waste sent to California landfills and reduce the need for additional mining and production to replace, rather than repair, devices. Californians currently throw away 46,000 cell phones a day and 772,000 tons of electronic waste—which often contains toxic heavy metals—per year.

In late August, Apple announced its support of the legislation. For years, Apple has been one of the most visible opponents of repair access while lobbying against giving consumers and independent repair shops what they need to fix devices. However, with the Right to Repair movement gaining recognition and support—and leading to laws in other states—Apple has reversed course and commended SB 244 for striking the right balance between “consumer choice and reliable repairs.” HP also came on board in September.

“Right to Repair is the radical yet sensible idea that we should make stuff that lasts and be able to fix our stuff when it breaks,” said Jenn. “We’re proud that with the visionary leadership of Sen. Talamantes Eggman, California can set an example for other states to follow.”
email (privacyanddataprotection@mastercard.com) and send them the clear message: Stop selling my data.

BEYOND PLASTIC

Costco makes new commitments to reduce plastic use

Thanks to your support, CALPIRG and our national network delivered more than 82,000 petitions urging Costco to cut back on wasteful packaging—and the company is listening.

Costco Wholesale has committed to increasing its transparency about its plastic use and developing a 5-year action plan to reduce the amount of plastic it uses. A growing body of data suggests that plastics and microplastics pose significant threats to public health and our environment.

Costco has committed to releasing data on the total plastic footprint—broken down by type of plastic—of its in-house brand, Kirkland Signature, by July 2024. The big box retailer has also committed to disclosing the percentage of recycled content used in its plastic packaging by that same date. Additionally, in December 2024, the company will release a 5-year plastic “action plan” that will outline the steps the company will take to reduce plastic in its Kirkland Signature packaging.

Costco’s commitments come after calls from both shareholders and the general public.

CLEAN AIR

Leaf blowers aren’t just noisy—they’re also huge polluters

You know that annoying sound all too well—the ear-piercing whine of your neighbor’s leaf blower.

But as it turns out, gas-powered leaf blowers and other lawn equipment are more than just a noisy neighborhood nuisance, with some machines emitting as much pollution in an hour as driving hundreds of miles in a car. And that pollution is released right in the middle of our neighborhoods, where people live and breathe, putting our health at risk.

The good news is electric lawn equipment is cleaner, quieter—and, over a lifetime of use, often cheaper—than gasoline-powered machines. Moreover, electric options are often just as capable as fossil fuel versions.

Our network recently released a new report across the country called “Lawn care goes electric” to help educate the public and call for cities and states around the country to take action to encourage the transition from gasoline-powered lawn equipment to clean electric options.

Visit our website to check out the report and learn more about why transitioning to electric lawn equipment is a good idea.

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Support our work in the public interest by including a gift to CALPIRG or CALPIRG Education Fund in your will, trust or retirement accounts.

For more information call 1-800-841-7299 or send an email to: plannedgiving@calpirg.org
In July 2023, Amazon announced that it would be “phasing out padded bags containing plastics in favor of recyclable alternatives.”

The eventual end of the blue and white plastic mailing envelopes is welcome news. Most plastic is landfilled, burned in incinerators, or broken into small pieces in the environment, rather than being recycled. Plastics have been found in nearly every corner of the globe, as well as in human bodies, potentially with harmful impacts.

Amazon is changing its practices after PIRG worked with Environment America and other allies to call on the company to reduce its single-use plastic packaging. Similar actions also have resulted in 1 in every 3 Americans living in a state with a ban of at least one type of single-use plastic. The action of one company or a few states won’t solve the whole plastic waste problem. But each new commitment to reduce plastic waste paves the way for the next.

Thanks to your action and support, we’ll continue to urge companies to reduce wasteful plastic packaging.