



PIRG staff call on Amazon to reduce plastic at a Valentine's Day event at its headquarters in Seattle. Credit: Ricky Osborne

## BEYOND PLASTIC

# We're calling on Amazon to reduce *more* plastic packaging

With more and more packages being shipped every day, the amount of plastic packaging waste is rising rapidly.

Often unrecyclable, this plastic goes to landfills, and like plastic bags, pollutes the environment and community.

PIRG is campaigning to reduce the amount of plastic packaging and plastic waste in America. We're urging Amazon and other companies to recognize the amount of plastic they use and seek more sustainable alternatives.

### More Amazon packages are shipped than ever before

Each year, Amazon's Prime Day sells a record number of items. In 2023, customers bought more than 375 million items. The company

broke that record again in 2024, selling more items than any Prime Day in history.

However, each item sold has to be shipped, and that means individual plastic packaging for hundreds of millions of items.

How big is this problem? According to a report by Oceana, the plastic waste generated by Amazon's plastic shipping pillows in 2020 could circle the Earth 800 times.

This plastic comes from bags, envelopes and packaging pillows meant to cushion the item. Amazon shipments also produce waste in other ways, such as emissions from shipping vehicles and promotion of wasteful tech that doesn't last.

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WINTER 2025

Thanks  
for making it  
all possible

## AMAZON PLASTIC PACKAGING CONT.

Staff



*Despite the reduction in air pillows, there's still more Amazon can do to reduce its plastic packaging.*

### Some of Amazon's plastic packaging is not recyclable

Recyclable materials have been an important part of Amazon's marketing strategy. Every blue and white bubble-lined bag used to have a recycling symbol. However, that symbol could be misleading.

Recently, Amazon updated some of their plastic blue and white bags to show that they are, in fact, not recyclable.

Additionally, plastic Amazon packaging that is made to be recycled often ends up in the trash anyway. PIRG's Truth in Recycling investigation placed trackers in Amazon plastic packaging and sent them to drop-off locations designated by Amazon's partner, How2Recycle. The investigation showed that out of 93 bundles of plastic that were sent to the drop-off locations, only four made it to recycling centers that handle plastic. Most packaging went to incinerators or landfills, or were made into nonrecyclable products.

### Help call on Amazon to use less plastic

It's clear that recycling Amazon plastic packaging is a failure, and that the company should take steps to minimize the plastic waste that flows out of its business.

PIRG's campaign for less plastic waste has made an impact. Recently, Amazon announced that it will phase out its plastic pillows by the end of 2024, getting rid of a wasteful and unnecessary feature of its shipping practices. Acknowledging that its plastic bubble-lined bags are not recyclable is a step in the right direction.

But much more can be done. Too much of Amazon's single-use plastic packaging still ends up as waste, polluting our homes, communities and environment. Amazon has eliminated its single-use plastic delivery bags across Europe to comply with the European Union's stricter regulations, which means it's possible for Amazon to do the same here.

PIRG is calling on Amazon to get rid of single-use plastic packaging, reduce the enormous amount of plastic that the company produces and switch to recyclable, sustainable alternatives. Already, thousands of supporters and members like you have sent a message to Amazon to ask it to reduce its plastic waste. If you haven't yet added your voice, you can add your own message at [calpirg.org/amazon](https://calpirg.org/amazon).

## NEWS BRIEFS

### HEALTH CARE

#### New California law takes medical debt off credit reports

A new California law will prevent medical debt from appearing on credit reports, creating a more fair credit system that doesn't factor in uncontrollable debt.

Medical debt affects roughly 43 million people across America, and 1 in 5 Californians have medical debt on their record. However, medical debt is a deeply inaccurate measure of credit repayment. It's uncontrollable, and even when paid off, it can remain on credit reports for up to seven years. With medical debt on your record, it can be difficult to get a loan, buy a home or even get a job.

On Sept. 24, Gov. Gavin Newsom signed SB 1061 into law, which prohibits medical debt from appearing on consumer credit reports. This law gets rid of an inaccurate and unfair metric of repayment that doesn't belong in the credit system.

"We've known for years that medical debt doesn't predict credit defaults, nor does it accurately predict a person's desire and willingness to pay off loans," said CALPIRG State Director Jenn Engstrom. "This new law will help create a fair credit system in California that doesn't penalize people for life events they can't control."

### OUR MISSION

CALPIRG is an advocate for consumers, advancing solutions to problems that affect our health, our safety and our well-being.

Learn more about us by scanning the QR code below:



**SPACE WASTE**

**New report highlights pollution problems caused by skyrocketing number of satellites**

Since 2019, over 7,000 new internet satellites have begun creating mega-constellations in our night sky. However, these satellites have a lifespan of only five years. According to “WasteX,” a report from the U.S. PIRG Education Fund released on Aug. 8, decommissioned satellites can pose a serious environmental issue.

Launching a satellite already releases pollutants from burning rocket fuel. When it’s decommissioned, the satellite is left to fall into the atmosphere and burn up, which could damage the ozone layer, spread gasses and smoke and launch dangerous debris. At peak deployment, 29 tons of metal could fall into the atmosphere every day.

PIRG, along with 120 top astronomy researchers, is calling on the Federal Communications Commission to make sure low Earth orbit satellites go through environmental review.

“We’re in a short window of time when we can prevent making a mess of space and our atmosphere rather than spend decades cleaning it up,” said Lucas Gutterman, director of PIRG’s Designed to Last campaign and author of WasteX. “The new space race doesn’t need to create massive space waste.”

**CONSUMER WATCHDOG**

**‘Trouble in Toyland 2024’ reveals imported dangers for kids**

Buying toys online has never been easier. But assurances that products meet safety standards, especially when they’re from overseas, can be lacking. PIRG’s Trouble in Toyland 2024 report covers these dangerous toys, and more.

Toys bought online from international e-commerce websites or apps often slip through inspection at the border. The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) reports that 1.6 million dangerous or illegal toys were confiscated by the CPSC in collaboration with the U.S. Customs and Border Protection in fiscal year 2024, with potentially many more going unnoticed.

Uninspected and untested products can have serious risks, including being made with toxic



KOLO

materials or small parts that could cause choking hazards.

*Teresa Murray talking about the findings of our Trouble in Toyland report on ABC.*

However, unsafe toys from overseas aren’t the only potential problem. The Trouble in Toyland 2024 report covers not just overseas toys, but also water beads, recalled toys, smart toys and other dangerous products marketed to children.

“While so many toys are made safer today, new threats have emerged,” said Teresa Murray, Consumer Watchdog for PIRG and author of Trouble in Toyland 2024. “By examining the problems and offering tips to shoppers, we want to help people avoid toys that could endanger their children’s health and ruin their holidays.”

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# CALPIRG

CITIZEN AGENDA • WINTER 2025



**TOP STORY: We're calling on Amazon to reduce more plastic packaging**

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## BEYOND PLASTIC

# Plastic grocery bags are no more in California

Waste from plastic bags is at an all time high. This new California bill bans them for good.

On Sept. 22, Gov. Gavin Newsom signed SB 1053 into law, completely banning plastic grocery bags. This is a huge victory towards reducing plastic pollution and preventing the spread of microplastics.

California first passed a bill attempting to ban plastic grocery bags in 2014. However, the bill left a loophole open for thicker, "reusable and recyclable" plastic bags which spread throughout grocery stores. In reality, less than 2% of these new bags were ever reused and California municipal facilities could not recycle them. This new bill closes the loophole and cuts off a significant source of plastic waste. CALPIRG campaigned to gather thousands of signatures and build support from city officials and environmen-



CALPIRG staff went to the state capitol for an event in Feb. 2024, celebrating the new bag ban bill.

tal groups. This support, as well as the valuable support from our members, helped finally push the bill into law.

"Californians voted to ban plastic grocery bags in our state almost a decade ago, but the law clearly needed a redo," said Jenn Engstrom, state director of CALPIRG. "With the Governor's signature, California has finally banned plastic bags in grocery checkout lanes once and for all."

## FEATURED STAFF



Staff

**Jenn Engstrom:** Jenn directs CALPIRG's advocacy efforts and is a leading voice in Sacramento and across the state on protecting public health, standing up for consumers and defending our democracy. Previously, as the deputy national director for the Student PIRGs, she helped run our national effort to mobilize hundreds of thousands of students to vote.

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