



NEWS RELEASE

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WISCONSIN'S RECYCLING INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS RESPOND TO LEGISLATIVE AUDIT BUREAU REPORT

(STEVENS POINT, WI) – The Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau (LAB) recently released its long-awaited evaluation of the statewide recycling program. The original charge to LAB, from the Joint Legislative Audit Committee, included an evaluation of recycling best management practices and an evaluation of the system for allocating recycling grants to local units of government, as well as an assessment of recycling markets which underpin the recycling program.

The hundreds of members of Associated Recyclers of Wisconsin (AROW), Solid Waste Association of North America Badger Chapter (SWANA) and Wisconsin Counties Solid Waste Management Association (WCSWMA) have worked for decades as the boots on the ground to implement one of the nation's finest, most comprehensive recycling programs. While these organizations appreciate the work of the LAB in working to understand the details and nuances of this massively popular program, the organizations see additional opportunities and recommendations that could lead to much more substantive improvements to the recycling system which directly impacts every household in Wisconsin.

“Our commitment to a highly functioning recycling program for the state of Wisconsin and its citizens remains as our paramount goal. We know this can be achieved through the continuous improvement and collaboration between industry professionals, the Wisconsin DNR, the Legislature, and local units of government,” said Meleesa Johnson, Associated Recyclers of Wisconsin President.

The revenue used to aid local units of government recycling programs originates as a Recycling Fee imposed at landfills, amounting to a 35% state tax on landfill disposal. The original intent of the Recycling Fee was to help local units of government off-set the cost of administering the Recycling Law. However, in recent years, these funds have been diverted to the state's general fund and used to pay for non-recycling related programs. This meant a sixty percent (60%) cut in aid to local units of government and funding to administer the entire state program.

The remaining funds, covering far less of programmatic costs than originally covered, are dispersed using a 21 year old formula. For programs to continue to grow and meet the ever changing demands of the industry, equitable and sufficient funding is needed. This will allow local units of government the ability to better implement the education and outreach recommendations of the LAB.

“As the voice of recycling and solid waste, these organizations have been on the forefront of tackling recycling challenges,” says WCSWMA chairperson Gerry Neuser. He adds that this is why the three organization conducted a thorough evaluation of the recycling system, as reported in the Future of Wisconsin Recycling Development Workgroup (FOWRD). The FOWRD Report was released to the public in 2017.

John Welch, the former vice-president of AROW and current SWANA president, notes that the industry never shied away from the issues that face recycling. “When Wisconsin material recovery facilities were facing a glass recycling crisis, AROW responded by forming the Glass Taskforce.” The Taskforce joined together haulers, recycling processors, glass recycling brokers, DNR and local units of government to find solutions to fix the issues related to recycling glass. Our strength is our collective efforts... our members working together to make the whole recycling system robust, easy to use, easy to understand, and sustainable now and into the future.

AROW, SWANA and WCSWMA stand in strong support of the local units of government working to provide this critical service and of the DNR as they work to administer the Recycling Law. The organizations look forward to working with

the Legislature and the DNR to implement not only the recommendations of the LAB report, but also those identified in the FOWRD Report.

For more information about recycling and industry insights visit recyclemorewi.org, swana-wi.org or wcswma.org.

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

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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.

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

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