



OFFICE OF SENATOR SABINA FLORES PEREZ

Chairperson

Committee on Environment, Revenue and Taxation, and Procurement

I MINA'TRENTAI SINGKO NA LIHESLATURAN GUAHAN

35TH GUAM LEGISLATURE

PRESS RELEASE

Senator Perez Introduces Guam Zero Waste Act

Guam, June 2, 2020 – On Monday, Senator Sabina Perez introduced Bill 362-35 (LS), also known as the Guam Zero Waste Act. The bill proposes a comprehensive collection of cost-saving, environmentally focused measures to promote recycling and zero waste initiatives on Guam, and is co-sponsored by Speaker Muña Barnes, Vice Speaker Nelson, Senator Marsh Taitano, Senator Ridgell, and Senator Castro.

“With the drastic economic impacts of the continuing global pandemic, we must act now to improve the management of waste streams and reduce their financial impact on our community,” said Senator Perez. “The Guam Zero Waste Act modernizes local statutes, improves recycling and cleanup processes that are costly and inefficient, and establishes of a series of significant zero waste measures to boost our economy and protect our environment,” she added.

Drafted in close collaboration with the Guam Environmental Protection Agency, the legislation updates statutes creating the Recycling Revolving Fund (RRF) and recognizes that the global recycling industry has changed significantly in the 16 years since the RRF was established. With China banning the importation of most forms of recyclable materials in 2017, today traditional recycling models are no longer financially sustainable.

“China’s dramatic shift undermining the global recycling industry, along with the pandemic-induced economic downturn, are back-to-back body punches to our solid waste system,” said Senator Perez. “The Guam Solid Waste Authority is tracking to lose \$2M this year. We must proactively develop solutions, including zero waste initiatives, to protect our environment and reduce costs,” she added.

“Zero waste” initiatives are gaining traction worldwide as they prove successful in addressing the changing landscape for recycling and waste management. A “Zero waste” approach expands upon principles of recycling by focusing on overall waste reduction and is a cost-effective means of preserving resources and building resiliency against the negative impacts of climate change.

Bill 362-35 enables the Zero Waste Guam Working Group, created by EO 2019-28, to develop a number of critical, long-envisioned government zero waste plans, such as: a Compost Master Plan, a Food Resource Recovery Plan, a Greening Roadways Initiative, a Recycling Enterprise Zone (as authorized by PL 31-20), and an update of the Guam Zero Waste Master Plan.

The bill also addresses the Guam Beverage Container Recycling Act (GBCRA). While the GBCRA laid a strong foundation for a bottle deposit program, in the nine years since enactment, implementation has hit financial roadblocks. Bill 362-35 will provide seed funding to launch the program within two years, after which the GBCRA will reimburse the full amount using revenues from the established program.



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“The Zero Waste Act also follows up from the foundation I laid with the Guam Beverage Container Recycling Act. Being a cleaner, greener, and healthier Guam has always been a long-term goal of mine, and I am grateful for the support and vision of Senator Sabina Perez for moving towards a more sustainable island community,” said Speaker Tina Rose Muña Barnes.

Bill 362-35 also authorizes GEPA to award competitive grants and loans to promising, local zero waste initiatives. A new Zero Waste Grant Program will fund non-profits and local educational institutions conducting zero waste research and community projects. And, a Zero Waste Revolving Loan Program, implemented in partnership with the Guam Economic Development Authority, will provide low-interest and no-interest loans to local businesses and non-profits seeking to develop zero waste cottage industries. Both programs will competitively select awardees based on the estimated positive impact to our island community and will prioritize ventures operated by or employing senior citizens or the disabled. “Zero waste grants and loans will spark investment in cottage industries, and promote a transition toward a diversified, circular economy,” said Senator Perez.

The Guam Zero Waste Act also:

- Recognizes the importance of the Mayors’ Council of Guam’s island-wide cleanup program and affords the option of utilizing the Department of Public Works to contract private recycling companies on behalf of MCOG. Improved funding of island cleanups will reduce litter and benefit Guam’s tourism industry.
- Authorizes the purchase of technology to support the Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan, including glass grinders and tire shredders to reduce material going to the landfill while creating aggregate for use in greening Guam’s roadway infrastructure.
- Natural disaster recovery efforts often struggle with debris management, further threatening public health and the environment. Bill 362-35 incorporates zero waste practices into government disaster debris management efforts, including development of safe transition sites to collect disaster debris and sort out recyclable, compostable, and beneficial use waste streams.
- Establishes the Zero Waste Pledge to benchmark and recognize local businesses that adopt environmentally responsible practices.
- Creates a Zero Waste Ambassadors Program, to train and support a network of zero waste community advocates, including facilities to implement recycling and zero waste initiatives in our villages.

“We need bold, proactive solutions. Bill 362-35 modernizes the Recycling Revolving Fund to meet the challenges we face today. The bill saves taxpayer funds by extending the life of our landfill, diversifies our economy by promoting new cottage industries, and protects our environment,” said Senator Perez.

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