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## July 2015 EcoFacts



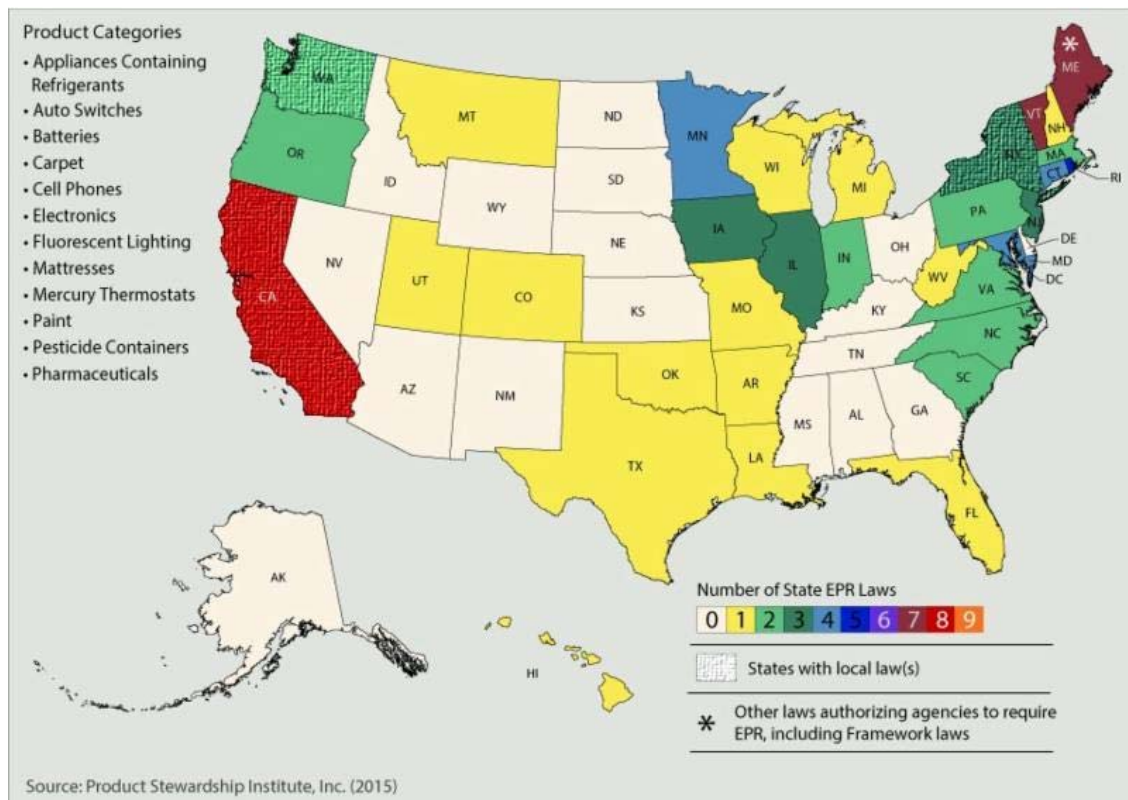
### Product Stewardship and Extended Producer Responsibility

Manufacturing is the second largest industry in Nebraska and there are over 1800 manufacturing establishments in the state. Clearly, manufacturing is important to the U.S. economy, and we all need the goods they produce to conduct our daily lives. However, many products and their packaging end up in the landfill after we have used them. Some products contain hazardous materials and shouldn't be landfilled, but because the local infrastructure for disposing of these products safely do not exist or are not always available, they erroneously end up in the landfill. What do Nebraskans think? According to data collected in the Nebraska Annual Social Indicators Survey [1], sixty-one percent of Nebraskans agree or strongly agree that manufacturers should pay the cost of providing recycling services for the products they create. Ninety-one percent agree or strongly agree that manufacturers of products containing lead, mercury, and other hazardous chemicals have a responsibility to ensure they stay out of the environment.

What can you do? Educate yourself. The Product Stewardship Institute has developed definitions for product stewardship and extended producer responsibility that will provide a common definition for what Nebraskans have expressed:

**Product stewardship** is the act of minimizing the health, safety, environmental, and social impacts of a product and its packaging throughout all lifecycle stages, while also maximizing economic benefits. The manufacturer, or producer, of the product has the greatest ability to minimize adverse impacts, but other stakeholders, such as suppliers, retailers, and consumers, also play a role. Stewardship can be either voluntary or required by law. [2]

**Extended producer responsibility (EPR)** is a mandatory type of product stewardship that includes, at a minimum, the requirement that the manufacturer's responsibility for its product extends to post-consumer management of that product and its packaging. There are two related features of EPR policy: (1) shifting financial and management responsibility, with government oversight, upstream to the manufacturer and away from the public sector; and (2) providing incentives to manufacturers to incorporate environmental considerations into the design of their products and packaging. [2]



## Policy

Several states have passed EPR laws to protect citizens from harmful substances found in consumer goods, and to protect communities (tax payers) from bearing the cost of safe disposal of products that could be recycled or should be for safety reasons. EPR laws protect manufacturers by leveling the playing field for all manufacturers of the same types of products, and increase innovation by incentivizing better design that reduces or eliminates problematic materials. Whether manufacturers practice product stewardship, or sensible EPR laws are passed, it can be a win-win for Nebraskans. For more information or to get involved, visit the Nebraska Product Stewardship Initiative web site: [www.productstewardshipnebraska.org](http://www.productstewardshipnebraska.org).

[1] [Nebraska Annual Social Indicators Survey, 2013](#)

[2] <http://www.productstewardship.us/?page=Definitions>

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