

Chinese ban on waste imports puts Northwest recycling in limbo

Too many contaminants

By CASSANDRA PROFITA

Oregon Public Broadcasting

Apparently, people in the United States haven't been doing a very good job of sorting trash from recycling — and the Chinese government has noticed.

China doesn't want loads of paper and plastic waste that often have contaminants like dirty diapers inside.

So, the government is cracking down on the shipment of recyclable material from the U.S. By the end of the year, much of the mixed plastic and paper in recycling bins will be banned from China.

That leaves companies in the Northwest without buyers for much of the material they collect from curbside bins, which could mean recyclables will end up in a landfill.

Peter Spindel, natural resource specialist with the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, said the loss of Chinese buyers is a major disruption in the recycling market. It's unclear where all the paper and plastic will go instead.

"We've seen markets go up and down before, but this is big," he said. "When the major buyer cuts out with almost no notice — it's going to be a struggle for a while. There's just no way around it."

Recycling companies have warned regulators that they



Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

China is concerned about the amount of contaminants in U.S. waste.

may need permission to trash recyclables while they look for new buyers.

Some, including Far West Recycling in Portland, are slowing down their operations to more carefully remove garbage to meet China's new standards for contamination.

Far West outreach manager Vinod Singh said he's most concerned about where his company is going to send all of its mixed paper — things like junk mail, catalogs, small cardboard boxes and packaging — which will only increase with the holiday season approaching.

"China is by far the biggest consumer of mixed paper," he said. "They're the global consumer."

There's already fewer buyers because China is still in the

process of reissuing licenses to recycling companies. Meanwhile, prices for recyclable materials are dropping. So, while Far West is spending more to sort trash from recyclables it's also making less on the materials it's selling.

"People are starting to get nervous that we're putting things on order that won't get there before the ban kicks in," he said.

Spindel said Northwest recyclers used to sell mixed paper to local paper mills, but two of those mills in Oregon have closed in recent years and one in Longview, Washington, stopped taking mixed paper.

Spindel and Singh both agreed that people who are putting materials in their recycling bins can help the cause by

making sure they only put the approved recyclable items in their curbside bins.

"The public can't help much for finding markets for these materials," Spindel said. "But this is a good time to really think about what you're putting in your bin and make sure you're not putting in things that don't belong there."

Things like garden hoses, plastic bags and Christmas tree light strings don't belong in the curbside recycling bin and cause major problems at the sorting facility.

"They get wrapped around the screens and they clog up the machinery," he said. "They just slow up the process and send your things on the long road to the landfill instead of the short road."

Poll: Majority oppose state tax on health care

By PARIS ACHEN
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Most Oregonians oppose a proposed \$600 million tax on health insurance policy premiums to fund the state's Medicaid program, according to a survey by icitizen.

About 58 percent of 645 respondents surveyed online by the Nashville pollster said they oppose the tax, while 35 percent support it. Icitizen did not verify whether respondents were registered voters, only that they were Oregon residents.

Three Republican state lawmakers want to refer parts of the law — which raises a variety of revenues to help the state pay for the Oregon Health Plan, the state's version of Medicaid.

"We have not done any polling so I have nothing to compare it to, but I would say it is consistent with feedback we have received from folks who signed the petition," said state Rep. Julie Parrish, R-West Linn, who spearheaded a petition for the referral.

Petitioners must gather nearly 59,000 signatures by today to place the referral on the ballot for a January special election.

'Connect some dots'

The survey asked respondents: "There is an effort to refer Oregon voters a new, nearly \$600 million tax on health insurance policy premiums. The money is intended to cover the costs of the Oregon Health Plan, the state's Medicaid program. Would you support this new tax on health insurance premiums?"

Parrish said the repeal represents only \$380 million out of the \$600 million tax. "We're not referring the entire thing," she said.

Petitioners, who include Parrish and Republican state Reps. Sal Esquivel of Medford and Cedric Hayden of Roseburg, want to repeal a 0.7 percent tax on hospitals and providers.

Other sections of the law they want to refer to voters are taxes on insurers, the Public Employees Benefits Board and coordinated care organizations, the regional provider networks for Medicaid patients. They also want to stop a provision of the law that allows insurers to increase premiums by up to 1.5 percent to recover costs of the insurer assessment.

Patty Wentz, spokesperson for the Oregon Health Care Coalition, said the

poll appears to be timed to achieve a political end.

"Let's connect some dots. You have a push poll with wildly inaccurate information released a few days before signature turn-in by a political operative who has been supported by the same extreme right-wing groups as the chief petitioner, such as the Oregon Firearms Federation," Wentz said. "This is a cynical political ploy with no relevance to reality, to the actual referendum, and what's at stake for the one million Oregonians who count on the Oregon Health Plan and the more than 210,000 people whose premiums will increase if the referendum doesn't pass. Oregonians who want accurate information should read the ballot title and the fiscal impact estimate that were created through a bipartisan public process and are posted online."

Division on DACA

Respondents, who were registered users of icitizen, filled out the online survey online between Sept. 13 and Sept. 28. The responses were weighted to census benchmarks for gender, age, race, education, region and party identification in the state. The margin of error is 3.9 percentage points for the full sample of 645 respondents.

The survey also gauged Oregonians' views on other state policies.

A new law expanding coverage of reproductive health care, including abortion, to people of all incomes, U.S. citizenship status and gender identity garnered 49 percent support and 50 percent opposition.

Respondents also were almost evenly split over a new law to reduce criminal penalties for possession of heroin, cocaine and methamphetamine from a felony to a misdemeanor.

A majority of respondents, 54 percent, oppose sanctuary cities, which prohibit police from profiling immigrants and from assisting federal authorities in enforcing federal immigration law.

More than half of respondents, 51 percent, support ending the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. The program allows undocumented youth brought to the country as children to legally work and attend school here.

Capital Bureau reporter Claire Withycombe contributed to this report.

Attorney claims a 'staggering' number of Boy Scouts were abused

By ANDREW SELSKY
Associated Press

SALEM — Three former Boy Scouts are suing the Boy Scouts of America and its Portland-area chapter for \$21 million, alleging it hired a known pedophile who then sexually abused them in the 1970s.

One of the attorneys who filed the lawsuit said his firm has handled close to 100 similar cases against the scouting organization, and that the number of victims is "staggering."

The Boy Scouts of America knew of thousands of cases of scout leaders sexually abusing scouts over decades, attorney Peter Janci said.

"Following their founding in the early 1900s, by 1935 the Boy Scouts had already caught 1,000 scout leaders who had sexually abused Boy Scouts," Janci told The Associated Press in an email.

"Boy Scout documents and testimony show that there

were more than 2,000 secret files on pedophile scout leaders created just between 1965 and 1985, and more than 6,000 were created from 1970-2007," Janci said. The Boy Scouts claim to have destroyed many of the files, he added.

The lawsuit against the Boy Scouts and its local chapter, the Cascade Pacific Council, says Calvin Malone was kicked out of scouting after he had been caught abusing at least one scout in California in 1970. The suit says that Malone was hired to be a scout leader in Portland in 1974.

Internal scout documents Janci provided show the Boy Scouts warned the Cascade Pacific Chapter, soon after it hired Malone in 1974, that he had provided alcohol to scouts, but made no mention of sexual abuse. Janci said Malone has testified that he abused a scout in California and that the boy turned him in to the Boy Scouts. Janci says the Boy

Scouts knew of the abuse and started a secret file on Malone.

The three former Boy Scouts in Oregon said they were allegedly sexually assaulted by Malone in 1974 and 1975 when they were 10 to 13 years old.

After being fired from the Boy Scouts in Portland in 1975 — documents show it was because he had spent more than \$1,000 in scout funds on himself — the Boy Scouts allowed Malone to rejoin scouting in Montana, the lawyers said. Four men have sued the Boy Scouts in Montana for sexual abuse Malone allegedly perpetrated there.

Malone was convicted of rape and child molestation in 1993 and is being held in a special detention facility for sex offenders in Washington state.

The Boy Scouts of America said Wednesday it cannot discuss ongoing litigation. But Matthew Devore, chief

executive officer of the Cascade Pacific Council, said in a statement that "the Boy Scouts of America is outraged there have been times when scouts were abused and we sincerely apologize to victims and their families."

Devore said since these alleged crimes occurred, the Boy Scouts have strengthened efforts to protect youths, including screening for adult leaders and staff, criminal background checks, and requiring two or more adult leaders be present at all times during scouting activities.

The alleged abuse and cover-ups recall scandals hitting the Catholic Church for sheltering pedophile priests, Janci said.

"We don't know the number of victims, but we know that there were thousands of perpetrators," Janci said. "There were likely exponentially more pedophiles who were not reported."

Judge won't release Iraq War veteran fighting deportation

By GENE JOHNSON
Associated Press

SEATTLE — An immigration judge in Washington state declined to release an Iraq War veteran from custody Wednesday while he fights the government's efforts to deport him.

Chong Kim, a South Korean immigrant and green card holder from Portland, struggled with drug addiction, homelessness and post-traumatic stress following his time in Iraq in 2009 and 2010, leading to convictions

for burglary and other charges.

Kim's lawyer and friends have said he has done well since completing a substance abuse treatment program run by the Department of Veterans Affairs early this year.

But immigration agents arrested him in April and brought him to a detention center in Tacoma, Washington. They plan to deport him because of his convictions.

"It's just wrong to be deporting an Army veteran," said Matt Luce, 41, of Troutdale, who attended high

school with Kim and traveled with three other former classmates to the hearing Wednesday. "Despite his convictions, he was on and continues to be on the right path. This is just a travesty of justice."

Kim's attorney, Tim Warden-Hertz of the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project, said that Immigration Judge Theresa Scala found that the government met its burden to show that Kim posed a danger to the public or a risk of flight, though he said she did not explain her rationale in court.

Warden-Hertz planned to

vapeal the decision, which he said illustrates the difficulty of obtaining bond in the immigration detention system.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment Wednesday.

In an earlier statement, the agency said Kim had been arrested after "it was determined he has a prior felony conviction in Multnomah County for attempt to commit arson in the first degree, among other charges."

Kim joined the National Guard in 2005 and served in Iraq in 2009 and 2010 before being honorably discharged. He came to the U.S. more

than 35 years ago, at age 5, and he became a legal permanent resident in 1981. He does not speak Korean, his friends have said.

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