



San Diego BBB

Crying over Spilled Milk:

Reducing Waste to Increase Sustainability

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Do you ever wonder what the teenage version of yourself would do in any given situation thrown at you? Maybe he would demonstrate some fearlessness and break you through that mental wall you've built or often times he might be reckless and crash you into a very real wall. But regardless of whether you secretly house an inner rebellious bad boy or a sweet school boy, the process of maturing takes personal management to control, regulate, and enhance your life. Similarly, a government needs to constantly re-examine its policies to make sure a good idea does not become a financial nightmare. A perfect example of a good theory turned bad policy is The People's Ordinance of 1919 which continues to provide free refuse collection for certain San Diego residents.

In a time when only 70,000 people lived in San Diego and mostly organic trash (such as various types of produce as well as meat and leaf litter) was collected for a fee by a private company to be sold to hog farmers, the idea of the government providing a free service and selling the "trash" to pig farmers was a profitable and environmentally sound policy. Now here we are in 2011 when E-waste and plastics are dumped into landfills outside Miramar Air Force Base. That bumpy car ride along the 52-freeway is a result of trash decomposing at different rates. Now, instead of gaining a profit from selling organic waste to farmers, the city spends \$37 million dollars a year to collect and dispose of trash in our environment.

Also, citizens who do not receive no-fee trash service must pay a private hauler to collect and dispose of their trash, in addition to supporting the no-fee service received by others through their contributions to the City's General Fund. All the while, the 304,000 San Diego recipients of the no-fee service never see a bill and are generally unaware of the true cost of this service. Under this ordinance there is no limit on the amount of waste the City will pick up without charge from an individual household, so there is no incentive to reduce waste if you are the lucky ten percent of the city.

The old saying, "don't cry over spilled milk", does not apply to the way we should perceive throwing out our trash. Reducing our waste is a positive and crucial step towards creating a sustainable future. A landfill releases harmful emissions into the atmosphere that can travel anywhere. The operation of a landfill itself causes noise, dust, and bio-aerosol emissions as well as very real risks to water, and our precious water supply. Watercourses include everything from the ditches located near the landfill, to the rivers and streams miles away. Rain will wash over the landfill, allowing debris, but more commonly, toxins, to wash into these watercourses. As a resident of San Diego who loves the beach, I find this unacceptable.

Let's face it, San Diego is beautiful. We have a choice to either discourage people from entering by making our city undesirable, or preparing for future growth with increasing efficiency, conservation, and recycling.

Creating a more equitable policy, as well as providing economic incentives for the Mandatory Recycling Ordinance to achieve its goal of full compliance would be a great policy to pursue, but an opinion is worthless without the action to make it priceless. The true goal should be reducing waste in whatever ways possible (recycling, composting, construction waste diversion, etc.) so we do not destroy San Diego's beauty. And for that, I encourage everyone in San Diego to take action. Reduce waste to increase sustainability and decrease your footprint to enhance the environment. Its elementary my friends Recycle, Reduce, Reuse to help create a better tomorrow, today!