



California Senate Kills Scrap Metal Theft Bill

A bill aimed at stopping metal theft was defeated by a Senate panel this week amid lobbying by recyclers and junk dealers.

Assembly Bill 844 targeted the growing problem of scrap metal theft, which has been plaguing cities throughout the country. The bill would have required that dealers beef up record-keeping and pay for some metals with checks. The goal was to ensure better tracking if the metals were later found to be stolen.

But the legislation got caught up in a debate on local control and was killed this week by the Senate Business, Professions and Economic Development Committee.

The bill's author, Assemblyman Tom Berryhill, R-Modesto, wanted to ensure that the bill did not override existing - and in some cases tougher -- rules already in place in several counties, including Sacramento, Fresno, Tulare, Kern, Kings and Madera.

But junk dealers and recyclers pressed for a statewide law that would supersede local rules. Complying with multiple local ordinances is complicated and costly, according to the industry.

The bill -- which cleared the Assembly earlier this year -- needed five "yes" votes in the Senate committee but got only three.

Recyclers will still have to deal with multiple ordinances, Berryhill said.

"The Legislature failed to get tough enough, so now the recycling industry will have to deal with county ordinances that are way tougher than this bill, and I'll be cheering those counties on," he said in a statement.

The industry plans to sponsor its own bill for a statewide law, said George Adams, chairman-elect of the Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries, a national trade group.

"We just cannot have all these different rules," he said. "Nobody has any idea what is the correct rule. How do you train your people and how do you teach your customers?" *Sacramento Bee*

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