

POLICY POSITION



Compensation for Essential Waste & Recycling Collection Services Negatively Impacted by COVID-19

NWRA POSITION

NWRA members, as deemed “essential,” must collect waste regardless of payment. Therefore, we are asking for an amendment to the CARES Act and the creation of a new program in Phase IV to provide compensation to private-sector waste and recycling industry contracts, that have gone unpaid as a result of the impacts of COVID-19, for providing essential public works services to ensure sanitary neighborhoods and clean public health.

BACKGROUND

The private-sector waste and recycling industry is essential to preventing the spread of disease and illness, especially now during the COVID-19 national emergency. The delivery of these services impacts all healthcare, residential, commercial, and industrial properties on a daily basis. It goes without saying that every day the employees in our industry perform their duties even though they are at an elevated risk of infection.

During this national emergency, NWRA members have been classified as “essential.” As a result, we will continue providing waste and recycling services to their customers and communities in order to protect the public’s health and safety. However, in many instances, our members are not being compensated for their services because the businesses they serve are shut down as a result of the pandemic. In addition, on March 23rd, Kansas Governor Laura Kelly signed an Executive Order temporarily requiring the continuation of waste collection and recycling services without regard to payment by customers.

We are concerned that as more businesses and families are adversely impacted by the economic downturn that additional state and local leaders will issue similar orders. If this happens, it will have a devastating economic impact on our members and could impact services. This challenge is something our members already are facing today. According to POLITICO, “One Manhattan-based carter said its [business] customer portfolio has dropped by 30 percent — and more drastic cuts are expected.” Yet at the same time, on the residential side, as more and more citizens are staying home, collection has increased an estimated 30-40 percent.

Providing these essential services to those that are unable to pay as a result of economic hardships while employing the necessary workforce requires government assistance.

CONGRESSIONAL REQUEST

Congress should amend HR XXXX, the CARES Act, Section XXX, page XXXX paragraph XXXX which reads “the term “covered utility payment” means payment for a service for the distribution of electricity, gas, water, transportation, telephone, or internet access for which service began before February 15, 2020;” to add at the end of line XXXX, “and waste and recycling collection services”

NWRA supports the creation of a program whereby deemed critical essential infrastructure public works services, including waste/recycling collection, can submit un-paid contracts for government’s consideration of payment.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Congress must amend The CARES Act in Phase IV to allow for funds to be used by businesses to pay for waste and recycling collection services.
- A program must be established to compensate the deemed essential public works / public safety waste and recycling industry for providing unpaid services to protect public health and wellness.
- Any economic crisis forcing shutdowns means collections stop and waste accumulates – something we do not want and are actively focused on working with Congress to prevent and avoid.