



May 6, 2021

Testimony by Hon. Amy Volk

Director of Communications and Public Relations, Volk Packaging Corporation

in Opposition to

**LD 1541 An Act To Support and Improve Municipal Recycling Programs and Save Taxpayer Money &
LD 1471 An Act To Establish a Stewardship Program for Packaging**

Sen. Brenner, Rep. Tucker, and members of the Environment & Natural Resources Committee, I am Amy Volk, former Senator in the District now represented by Sen. Brenner, and I live now in Saco. I am before you as the Director of Communications and Public Relations for Volk Packaging Corporation in Biddeford.

Volk Packaging Corporation (VPC) is a third-generation family-owned and operated manufacturer of corrugated packaging in Biddeford. For those of you unfamiliar with corrugated, think moving and shipping boxes, as opposed to cereal or shirt boxes.

VPC designs and manufactures packaging solutions, largely for other manufacturers, in Northern New England. We pride ourselves on our reputation as an employer who does things right, including our sustainability.

Quick VPC stats for 2019:

- VPC shipped 289 million square feet of board, 62 % of which stayed in Maine.
- We delivered 22 million boxes in over 2,000 trailer loads to more than 500 Maine customers.
- We paid \$5.4 million to Maine vendors.
- We paid over \$183,000 in taxes to the City of Biddeford.
- VPC donated more than \$100,000 to almost 100 different non-profits in 2019 alone.

Here are some facts about corrugated and recycling:

- Corrugated is 100% Renewable and Recyclable
- Corrugated packaging is the most recovered packaging material in the U.S.
- More than 92% of all corrugated containers produced in 2019 were recovered for recycling.
- VPC's boxes are 81% post-consumer, 84% overall
- VPC recycles approximately 1,856 tons of premium scrap a year.



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- VPC recycled 621 tons of Old Corrugated Containers (OCC) scrap in 2019, much of which we picked up from customers. This scrap contains food contaminants, ink, staples, tape, etc. and thus requires more processing. However, it is still recycled.

Volk Packaging was founded by my husband Derek's grandfather and father in 1967 with 5 employees. They were the first tenants in the Biddeford Industrial Park and have been there ever since. Facts:

- VPC employs over 100 full time workers who are offered flexible health and dental insurance plans (they choose from a menu), paid time off, 401K, and paid parental leave.
- 10% of VPC employees have worked more than half their lives at VPC.
- Average VPC Associate has worked there for 13 years.
- VPC Associates have a combined 1,000+ years of service to our company.
- Total 2020 payroll exceeded \$6 million.

We treat our employees like family. Their pay and benefits are competitive, with regular wage increases and annual merit-based bonuses awarded. We also work hard to foster a fun, safe work environment which features seasonally themed competitions and events, such as Halloween costume contests, barbecues, pizza parties and the much-anticipated Corrugated Olympics which coincide with the Winter and Summer Olympics.

Volk employees rarely leave and many who do eventually return. Our employees do not simply survive in manufacturing. They thrive. They raise families, drive reliable vehicles, eat out, take vacations, fish, hunt, ATV, snowmobile, even race cars, all in Maine. They send their kids to college (VPC also offers scholarships to employees and their children.). Most own their own homes and many even own more than one, paying property taxes up north in rural communities, likely some of the same this bill is intended to help.

Why is this relevant to you, the members of the ENR Committee? It's relevant because when you impose fees, essentially raising taxes on producers/manufacturers/job creators and providers, you effectively punish these hardworking people, our employees. You punish the employees of every other producer/job provider in the state of Maine.

When you force Volk Packaging to rethink its budget, scale back its investments and re-evaluate our payroll, bonuses and benefits, you are taking money from all our pockets and ultimately from the pockets of Maine taxpayers as businesses falter or leave. We have seen far too many



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of our Maine-grown customers leave for other states or sell out to larger companies who only look at protecting their bottom line.

Furthermore, I suggest that members of this committee who are concerned, as I am, about our environment, consider reading Time Magazine “Hero of the Environment” award winner Michael Shellenberger’s new book **Apocalypse Never: Why Environmental Alarmism Hurts Us All**. [Here is an article from Forbes that he wrote, in which he addresses the issues surrounding our attempts to recycle plastics](#). In short, plastics intended for recycling end up being shipped to third world countries and, in the process, often wind up in the ocean.

We have more than 100 families that depend on us and we do our part. Gladly. With thanksgiving, in fact.

I am asking you to do your part and vote this bill and any future legislation like it Ought Not to Pass. This bill is incredibly complex and has far-reaching consequences. I would hazard a guess that most of the businesses that will be impacted are not even aware that it has been proposed. Sure, Portland and Southern Maine municipalities support the bill but do the municipalities this is intended to help even support it?

Thank you.

Amy Volk

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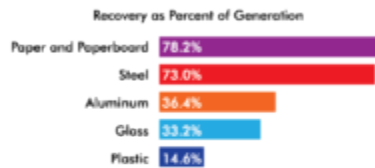
96 PERCENT RECOVERY RATE

In 2018, the recovery rate for old corrugated containers (OCC) was 96 percent, up from 54 percent in 1993.



MOST RECOVERED MATERIAL

More corrugated packaging is recovered for recycling than any other packaging material.



Source: 2015 EPA "Advancing Sustainable Materials Management: 2015 Fact Sheet"



RECOVERED OCC MAKES MORE BOXES

Nearly all old corrugated containers (OCC) are used to make new paper products. The average corrugated box contains 50 percent recycled content.

RECYCLING PROGRAMS ARE EVERYWHERE

96 percent of Americans have access to community curbside or drop-off corrugated recycling programs.



Source: 2014 AFRA Community Access Survey, Louis Berger, February 2015

INVESTING IN EDUCATION

The corrugated box industry has made significant investments to educate retailers and consumers on the benefits of recycling corrugated materials.

In 1970, a corrugated company introduced the world to the familiar "chasing arrows" universally recognized as a recycling symbol today.



In 1994, the "Corrugated Recycles" symbol was introduced in the U.S., and today the symbol is present on a majority of corrugated packaging.



For the most up-to-date corrugated industry statistics and information, visit www.corrugated.org. For more information on what makes boxes extraordinary, visit www.boxesareextraordinary.com.