



Ohio is one of the states welcoming chemical recycling facilities. | Jordan Wolman/POLITICO

RED AND BLUE MAKE GREEN — Both red and blue states are getting into plastics recycling from different ends.

Where Democrat-run states like New York and California are passing laws to boost recycling rates and increase of recycled materials, GOP-led states like Texas and Ohio are welcoming a specific form of plastics recycling decried by environmentalists, our Jordan Wolman [reports](#).

Twenty-one states, 19 of them with Republican-controlled legislatures, have passed rules since 2017 favorable to permitting chemical recycling. [Nebraska](#), [Utah](#) and [Indiana](#) are weighing similar measures this session.

The result? Companies in blue states have begun sending plastic waste to red states that have embraced chemical recycling, which uses high heat to break down plastics into their fossil-fuel building blocks.

"We're open to business and we're open to recycling," said Utah **Rep. Tim Jimenez** (R), whose [bill](#) to permit chemical recycling plants is moving through the state Legislature. "California and Oregon, with the

way they're pushing recycling, we certainly would be open, and I think it would be easy for them to bring it here to Utah."

It's mostly symbiotic for now, but some see a brewing conflict as blue states keep refining their rules — and considering bans on chemical recycling. Regulators in Democrat-led states could be in the position of evaluating the credibility of recycling operations in a GOP-led state.

"Any controversy could start up in only a few years," said **David Allaway**, a senior policy analyst at the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, which has yet to decide whether it will allow chemical recycling to count toward its recycling target of 70 percent by 2050. Colorado is also in the midst of fleshing out its rules.

Environmentalists are raising objections over the emissions associated with chemical recycling facilities. "It is a major concern if states...are outsourcing their recycling to other states or other countries with less rigorous standards," said **Anja Brandon**, a U.S. plastics policy analyst at the Ocean Conservancy.

Lawmakers in a dozen other blue states, including Washington, Maryland and New York, are working on their own recycling targets. The American Chemistry Council is fully engaged, lobbying for them not to exclude chemical recycling.

In the meantime, companies are watching the policy environment as they decide how much to invest in the technology.

"There's no consistency from how the states are designing these programs," said **Pete Keller**, vice president of recycling and sustainability at Republic Services. "So that adds to the uncertainty, and that adds to the risk."

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