

BRIEF

# Keystone landfill becomes campaign issue in Pennsylvania senate race

By [Cole Rosengren](#) • Oct. 11, 2016

## Dive Brief:

- Katie McGinty, Democratic candidate for the U.S. Senate in Pennsylvania, has come out against expanding the Keystone Sanitary Landfill, as reported by The Times-Tribune.
- The former state Department of Environmental Protection secretary held a joint appearance with advocacy group Friends of Lackawanna to oppose a plan that would extend the landfill's lifespan by nearly 45 years.
- McGinty also voiced support for Senator Bob Casey's proposed Trash Reduction and Sensible Handling (TRASH) Act which would limit interstate waste shipments. Her opponent, Senator Pat Toomey, has not taken a position on either issue.

## Dive Insight:

The Keystone landfill is the third-busiest by volume in the state and has been the subject of numerous attacks in recent years. The landfill operators argue that an expansion would provide economic benefits and long-term stability to the region, but local advocates disagree. Efforts have been made to stop the expansion as well as revoke the site's operating permit and leachate line permit.

According to a new report from the Environmental Research & Education Foundation interstate waste shipments decreased between 2010 and 2013, though the practice is still common. Pennsylvania is one the top waste importers in the country, which has been a key point of contention among residents tired of dealing with material from states such as New York and New Jersey. Virginia has actually increased its imports recently, while the Big Run Landfill in Kentucky was forced to stop accepting out-of-state waste due to a lawsuit.

The TRASH Act would allow states to limit this by setting strict requirements and fees, but hasn't gained much traction since it was introduced last year. While it's unlikely the bill will receive much attention outside of McGinty's campaign anything is possible in a battleground state during such an unpredictable election year.

### **Recommended Reading:**

 The Times-Tribune

**U.S. Senate candidate McGinty opposes Keystone landfill expansion** 

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 The Times-Tribune

**Scranton neighborhood group takes fight against landfill leachate line to court** 

<http://thetimes-tribune.com/news/u-s-senate-candidate-mcginty-opposes-keystone-landfill-expansion-1.2102397>

## **U.S. Senate candidate McGinty opposes Keystone landfill expansion**

KYLE WIND, STAFF WRITER / PUBLISHED: OCTOBER 11, 2016



**Katie McGinty and local activists held a press conference to discuss her concerns about the expansion of the Keystone Sanitary Landfill on Monday, Oct. 10, 2016. Jason Farmer / Staff Photographer**



**JASON FARMER / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER Katie McGinty, center, and Friends of Lackawanna hold a press conference to discuss her concerns about the expansion of the Keystone Sanitary Landfill on Monday at Lackawanna County Courthouse Square.**

U.S. Senate candidate Katie McGinty opposes Keystone Sanitary Landfill's controversial expansion plan and supports legislation that would give states new power to regulate incoming garbage, the Democrat said Monday.

The Dunmore and Throop facility — Pennsylvania's third-busiest landfill by permitted average daily volume — is seeking approval from the state Department of Environmental Protection to expand its disposal area 100 acres and extend its lifespan by 44.6 years.

Ms. McGinty, who is challenging Republican U.S. Sen. Pat Toomey, said she saw promise for Northeast Pennsylvania's future in the young professionals she met, the region's health care industry and area colleges — but not in the landfill industry.

“It’s time to hold up the incredible promise and possibility of Lackawanna County, of Luzerne County, of Northeastern Pennsylvania,” she said. “It’s not about trash. It’s about treasure. The treasure of education. The treasure of excellence in life sciences, in medicine, in medical devices. ... I oppose the expansion of the Keystone landfill because it’s not in keeping with the promise and the future of this community.”

In the appearance with anti-expansion group Friends of Lackawanna at Courthouse Square in Scranton, the former DEP secretary and chief of staff to Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf also expressed support for Democratic U.S. Sen. Bob Casey’s proposed TRASH Act.

Courts ruled states cannot ban out-of-state garbage without a new federal law giving them that power. Mr. Casey’s proposal would allow states to require incoming waste to meet their own standards for disposal and charge “community benefit fees.”

“This community has stepped up for decades to manage more than its fair share of this country’s waste management challenge,” Ms. McGinty said. “Frankly, it’s time for New York and New Jersey to step up and take care of our own trash.”

Mr. Toomey has not taken a position on the landfill expansion and his campaign did not respond to a request for comment on the TRASH Act.

Keystone describes benefits of the expansion plan, including holding down the region’s waste-disposal costs, keeping about 140 people employed and continuing fees the operation pays to state and local governments flowing.

Ms. McGinty said environmental issues Friends of Lackawanna raises “need to be given thorough consideration and examination” through a thorough, open, transparent and inclusive DEP review.

She did not say whether the agency she once oversaw should grant Keystone’s expansion request, saying she comes from more of a federal than state perspective.

Pat Clark, a Friends of Lackawanna leader, said the organization can’t endorse any candidates but wants to open up the conversation to anyone running for office.

“The landfill unfortunately is already a dominant feature in our valley,” Mr. Clark said. “There’s not much we can do about the past ... What we’re trying to do is prohibit the (expansion) and give ourselves a better future in its place.”

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Wednesday, August 5, 2015

## Casey Introduces Legislation to Restrict Flow of Trash Into PA From Other States

**TRASH Act Would Give States Ability to Leverage Own Solid Waste Management Plan to Create Higher Standards and Thereby Restrict Interstate Waste Imports / Plan Would Also Allow States to Impose Higher Fees on Out-of-State Waste**

Washington DC- Today, U.S. Senator Bob Casey (D-PA) announced that he has introduced legislation, the **TRASH Act**, to restrict the flow of out-of-state trash into Pennsylvania. The legislation would give states the ability to leverage their own solid waste management plans to create higher standards thereby restricting interstate waste imports. The bill would also allow states to impose higher fees on out of state waste.



“Pennsylvania shouldn’t be a dumping ground for trash from other states,” Senator Casey said. “This legislation would give all 50 states more control over the solid waste coming into their states. The TRASH Act allows states to devise a policy that works for the needs of local communities.”

### Trash Reduction And Sensible Handling (TRASH) Act

The **TRASH Act** would affect interstate shipment of municipal solid waste by:

1. Allowing a State, through its State solid waste management plan, to restrict interstate waste imports by setting higher standards for waste handling within the State.
  - For example, if a State or local municipality requires certain amounts of recycling, composting, or waste reduction measures, that State would be able to restrict out-of-State waste unless the exporting State complies with the same or higher standards.
2. Allowing a State, through its State solid waste management plan, to impose a higher fee on out-of-State waste (regardless of the exporter’s compliance with in-State waste handling and reduction measures). The fee would be called a community benefit fee, which a State may provide to an affected community. States would be allowed to differentiate the fee on waste disposed of at a landfill versus at an incinerator or waste-to-energy facility.

### PA municipal solid waste disposal facts

Municipal waste is generated by 12 million Pennsylvania citizens, the government and upwards of thousands of commercial businesses across the state. According to DEP, since 2006:

- The annual quantity of municipal waste from Pennsylvania managed at Pennsylvania’s landfills and resource recovery facilities has decreased from 10.3 million tons to 8.5 million tons in 2013.

- The per capita disposal of municipal waste in Pennsylvania decreased from 4.53 pounds/person/day to 3.7 pounds/person/day in 2013.
- Out of state waste decreased from 9.2 million tons/year to 6.4 millions tons/year in 2013.
- Pennsylvania is a top waste importing state. In 2014, out-of-state waste (including MSW, residual, construction waste, etc.) came from:
  - New Jersey – 3,516,904 tons
  - New York – 2,682,977 tons
  - Maryland – 593,230 tons
  - West Virginia – 170,903 tons
  - DC – 75,110 tons
  - Delaware – 64,452 tons
  - Connecticut – 43,123 tons
  - Ohio – 38,545 tons
  - Virginia – 4,590 tons
  - Massachusetts – 1,809 tons
  - Puerto Rico – 1,646 tons
  - North Carolina – 1,254
  - California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Maine, New Hampshire, Tennessee, Vermont, Wisconsin – minimal amounts (under 300 tons)

#### **National municipal solid waste disposal facts**

Top trash importing states in 2007 were Pennsylvania, Virginia, Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin and Illinois. Top trash exporters were New York, New Jersey, Illinois, Missouri and Maryland, as well as Ontario, Canada.

According to EPA, in 2012, Americans generated about 251 million tons of MSW. Of this, we:

- discarded about 135 million tons of MSW (53.8%) in landfills
  - food waste is the largest component of discards at 21%
  - plastics comprise about 18%
  - paper and paperboard make up almost 15%
  - rubber, leather, and textiles account for about 11% of MSW discards
- recycled and composted materials comprised of almost 87 million tons of total MSW, equivalent to a 34.5% recycling rate
  - over 65 million tons of MSW reduced through recycling

- over 21 million tons reduced through composting
- combusted (with energy recovery) about 29 million tons for energy recovery (about 12%)
- recycled and composted 1.51 pounds out of our individual waste generation rate of 4.38 pounds per person per day
- combusted or discarded in landfills 2.9 pounds per person per day of MSW, when subtracting out what is recycled and composted
- recovered about 96% (2.8 million tons) of lead-acid batteries
- recovered about 70% (5.9 million tons) of newspaper/mechanical papers
- recovered over 57% of yard trimmings (19.6 million tons)

## Press Contact

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### Related Links

[Trash Reduction And Sensible Handling \(TRASH\) Act »](#)

A bill to amend the Solid Waste Disposal Act to authorize States to restrict interstate waste imports and impose a higher fee on out-of-State waste.

### Related Issues

[Jobs and the Economy](#)

[Energy and Environment](#)