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## VIEWPOINTS

# Closing recycling centers won't curb homelessness



BY JOE PEREZ  
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With no answer to the homeless epidemic, cities and "Not In My Backyard" (NIMBY) advocates go after recycling centers.

Visit your local recycling center on a weekend and you will see a line of

people with bags of bottles and cans patiently waiting to recycle them in order to receive their California Redemption Value, or CRV. The people in line are a diverse group and come from all walks of life — they include retirees, single moms, environmental advocates, small business owners, youth organizations, those with means and those without. Recycling centers reflect a cross-section of the communities they serve.

The motives for each customer at recycling centers differ. Some use

their CRV money to make ends meet, while others want the containers to be properly recycled and not end up in our landfills and oceans. They may be part of an organization that is recycling to raise money or some simply want their CRV back — since quite frankly, it's their money! Regardless of their background or motivation, recyclers are participating in an admirable activity that is good for their wallet and great for our environment.

Unfortunately, there is an alarming trend of

recycling facilities becoming society's scapegoat, stigmatized due to the fact that some of our customers include those experiencing homelessness. With homelessness in California at epic proportions, NIMBY advocates have the misguided perception that pushing small, local recycling centers out of their communities will somehow make the homeless disappear. Ironically, or perhaps intentionally, they seem to ignore that people experiencing homelessness, or who rely on recycling to make ends meet, are largely already in their backyard and will likely remain there until viable solutions are implemented.

Let us be perfectly clear: recycling centers do not cause or encourage homelessness. Removing local

recycling centers will not end homelessness, but it does hurt everyone who uses these facilities to redeem their containers and are doing their best to keep bottles and cans out of our landfills and oceans. What local municipalities and NIMBYs are doing is unjust, short-sighted and in no way addresses this critical problem that California faces. But it is taking away a pivotal form of income that encourages environmentalism.

All California consumers deserve the convenience of local recycling centers where they can get their CRV money back. That's the original intention of California's "Bottle Bill," to provide incentive to recycle beverage containers and to help keep our environment clean. If local recycling facilities are not available,

your grocery stores are required by law to take back bottles and cans and refund your CRV, or otherwise pay a fee. But that's not realistic, and it's not convenient for anyone.

The solution to end homelessness is not an easy one to find, and taking away a pivotal form of income that encourages environmentalism is not the right place to start. The fact is that policies have failed our neighbors and we need to work together to find reasonable, compassionate solutions to homelessness. Forcing neighborhood recycling centers to close is not the answer.

*Joe Perez is vice president of business development at rePlanet, which partners with major grocery chains throughout California to collect bottles and cans.*