

State of Paper and Packaging EPR Laws in the U.S.

BY SARA OSORIO

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for print and packaging shifts the cost of recycling systems from municipalities to the brands that produce printed paper and packaging, with the goal of encouraging better design, improving recyclability, and supporting a more circular economy. Under these laws, producers pay fees to a Producer Responsibility Organization (PRO), which manages collection and recycling infrastructure and incentivizes waste reduction at the source.

Since EPR packaging legislation was first introduced in Maine in 2021, PRINTING United Alliance has prioritized this issue. With no federal EPR law in place, a growing patchwork of state requirements is emerging. The Alliance continues to advocate for a national framework to reduce multi-state compliance complexity and has raised this issue with lawmakers during the PRINTING United Day on the Hill and the Legislative Fly-In.

Seven states, California, Colorado, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Oregon, and Washington, have now enacted packaging EPR laws, each at a different stage of implementation. While details vary, the direction is consistent: EPR is increasing expectations around packaging design, material selection, and data reporting across the supply chain.

California's SB 54 remains one of the most complex and closely watched programs. Full implementation is expected in 2027, with recent regulatory revisions aimed at improving

clarity. Oregon's EPR program has been challenged in court by the National Association of Wholesaler-Distributors, arguing that the law was unconstitutional on several grounds. On February 6, 2026, the association secured a preliminary injunction blocking enforcement against its members. A trial date has been set for July 13. The Alliance will be following the case closely since it could have broader implications for other states.

Looking ahead, EPR momentum shows no signs of slowing. Packaging EPR bills have been introduced in Georgia, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Tennessee and Wisconsin in 2026, with ongoing discussions in several other states. As the policy landscape evolves, printers and packaging converters should prepare for increased costs, compliance and reporting demands. The Alliance will continue engaging policymakers and providing updates as programs move forward. ■



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CONGRESSIONAL UPDATE

Supreme Court Trade Ruling: What It Means for the Printing Industry

A recent U.S. Supreme Court decision has redrawn the lines around presidential trade authority—an outcome with meaningful implications for the printing industry. On February 20, in a 6–3 ruling, the Court determined that President Donald Trump did not have authority under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) to impose broad, country-specific tariffs. The majority found that it is unconstitutional for the president to unilaterally set and change tariffs because taxation power clearly belongs to Congress. As a result, several categories of “reciprocal” tariffs and certain import duties tied to fentanyl-related enforcement claims have been invalidated.

Some tariffs implemented under separate legal authorities, such as those on steel and aluminum, remain in effect. But the ruling significantly narrows the executive branch’s ability to rely on emergency powers for large-scale tariff actions.

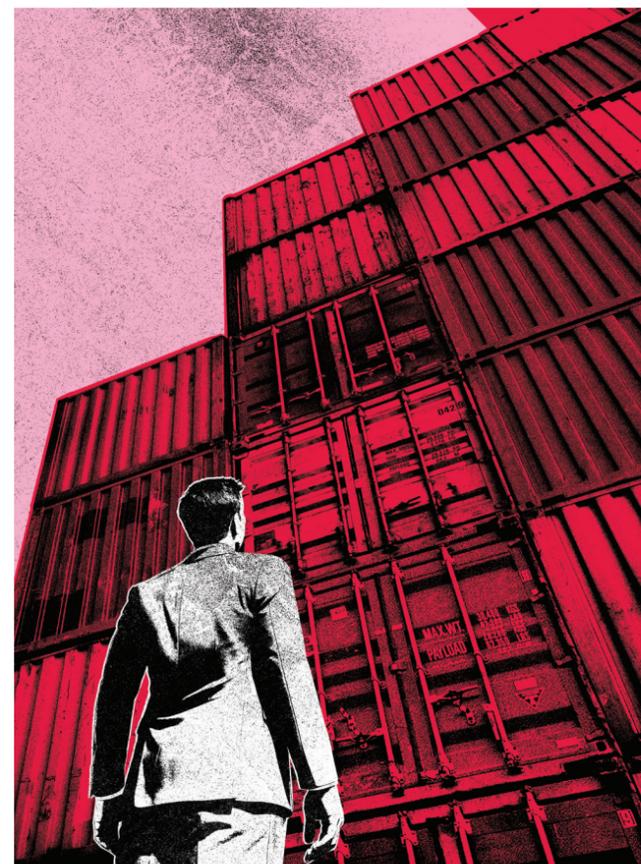
LOWER INPUT COSTS

Print service providers and converters depend on imported materials and components. Critical inputs include printing plates, finishing equipment, printheads and electronics, media such as vinyl, films, papers, textiles, and specialty substrates, as well as inks and coatings produced or partially manufactured abroad. Tariffs that increased landed costs in these categories have weighed on margins. Their

removal, along with the possibility of refunds, could help stabilize pricing and provide relief, particularly for small and mid-sized operations.

POTENTIAL REFUNDS IMPROVING CASH FLOW

Importers that paid duties under the invalidated tariffs may pursue refunds through the U.S. Court of International Trade. For distributors, OEMs, and high-volume buyers, recovered funds could translate into reinvestment—whether in automation, expanded inventory, or new capital equipment.



Getty Images: Oscar Wong

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GREATER PREDICTABILITY

The decision reinforces the authority of Congress to set tariff policy. For an industry that makes multi-year investments in presses, finishing lines, and facility expansions, fewer abrupt policy shifts reduce risk and support long-term planning. For printers, predictability is not a luxury—it is essential to competitiveness.

STRATEGIC IMPACTS FOR MANUFACTURERS AND SUPPLIERS

OEMs with global production networks may revisit sourcing, pricing, and logistics strategies in light of the ruling. If emergency-based tariffs are more constrained, cross-border manufacturing flexibility may improve, potentially bringing added stability to pricing for UV, eco-solvent, latex, and direct-to-film systems, as well as finishing and automation platforms, especially in price-sensitive market segments.

TARIFFS REMAIN A TOOL—WITH CLEARER GUARDRAILS

The Court did not eliminate tariffs as a policy instrument. Rather, it clarified that sweeping trade measures require clearer statutory grounding.

In response to the Court’s decision, on February 21, President Trump announced that he is increasing the global tariff rate to 15%, the maximum permitted under Section 122, effective immediately. The Administration has indicated that it will use other legal authorities, like Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974, to impose tariffs on countries individually based on their trade practices. The Administration could also expand the national security-related tariffs issued on various industries, like steel and aluminum, under Section 232 of the Trade Act of 1962. But those moves will take some time to prepare.

THE INDUSTRY OUTLOOK

For printing businesses, the ruling offers a measure of near-term relief and longer-term clarity. Reduced cost uncertainty, potential refund opportunities, and a more predictable trade framework support investment and competitive pricing across the supply chain.

PRINTING United Alliance will continue engaging with Congress and the Administration to advance practical, balanced trade solutions that support the printing industry’s role as a vital part of America’s manufacturing economy. Clear, durable trade policy is essential to protecting jobs, encouraging investment, and ensuring printers have the certainty they need to power growth at home and abroad. ■

Advocacy in Action

CONGRESSMAN RANDY FINE VISITS MBI DIRECT MAIL + DIGITAL



On January 27, Representative Randy Fine (R-FL-6) met with Shannon Yannone, President and CEO, and staff at MBI Direct Mail + Digital in DeLand,

Florida. Founded in 1989, MBI is a nationally recognized leader in integrated print and digital communications, delivering direct mail and cross-channel marketing solutions to clients nationwide. During the visit, Rep. Fine toured the facility and met with employees to learn how modern print manufacturing supports local jobs and economic growth in Florida’s Sixth Congressional District. PRINTING United Alliance thanks MBI for hosting the site visit and showcasing the value of print.

KEEP US POSTED HONORS 2026 BENJAMIN FRANKLIN AWARD RECIPIENTS

As part of its government relations efforts, **Keep US Posted** hosts an annual reception to present the Benjamin Franklin Award for Distinguished Leadership in Postal Policy. The award recognizes public officials who demonstrate leadership in strengthening the U.S. Postal Service for the businesses and communities that rely on it. On February 11, the award was presented to **Representative Pete Sessions** (R-TX-17) and **Senator Gary Peters** (D-MI) for their bipartisan support of sound postal policy. A third award was presented to **Robert G. Taub, Vice Chairman of the Postal Regulatory Commission**, for his public service and leadership. We congratulate the 2026 awardees and thank them for advancing policies that support a strong and reliable postal system.

PRINTING UNITED ALLIANCE JOINS RECYCLING LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

In February, the Alliance joined the **Recycling Leadership Council** (RLC), a cross-industry coalition working to reduce plastic waste, improve resource efficiency, and advance innovative recycling solutions. Led by the **Consumer Brands Association**, the RLC unites stakeholders across the manufacturing, packaging, and recycling value chain to provide a credible, unified voice on recycling policy. Through this engagement, the Alliance will advocate for passage of the *Recycled Materials Attribution Act*, a bill that would clarify key definitions, establish consistent federal recycling standards, and support consumer confidence, investment, innovation, and domestic manufacturing.



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