

## Illegal trash target of bill

### More authority would be given against violators

**By Tim Hearnden, Record Searchlight  
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A bill in the Legislature would allow cities and counties to appoint special peace officers to crack down on illegal dumping.

The legislation would give code enforcement officers or other civilians the power to make felony arrests and grant them the same liability protections as police or sheriff's deputies.

The bill appeals to Redding code enforcement supervisor Debra Wright, who said existing law gives her office only the power to issue civil citations. The citations carry fines of \$100 for a first offense if someone is caught in the act of dumping.

"Illegal dumping has reached epidemic proportions in California," Wright said. "It's not just here in the city of Redding or in Shasta County. It's anywhere where there's a lot of bare land. People are just dumping everywhere throughout the state.

"The problem we have here is, it overwhelms the resources," she said.

The bill by Assemblyman Roger Niello, R-Fair Oaks, also drew the attention of Shasta County Supervisors Chairwoman Trish Clarke, who asked county staff Tuesday to send a letter supporting the legislation.

"It gives a little bit better strength to handle some of these problems," Clarke said.

Under the proposal, non-peace officers who want enhanced powers would have to take the training that peace officers must take. No funding for new illegal-dumping officers is included in the bill.

The legislation passed the Assembly 75-0 on Jan. 17 and is in the Senate Public Safety Committee. Assembly members Doug LaMalfa, R-Richvale, and Patty Berg, D-Eureka, supported it.

Niello pointed to New York City, which diminished what had been a pervasive illegal-dumping problem by passing tough ordinances, increasing fines and deputizing its Department of Sanitation workers to go after dumpers.

Los Angeles adopted a similar program, but its sanitation inspectors have only misdemeanor arrest authority. That authority does not give them access to criminal history information or allow them to check vehicles for warrants to alert them if they're approaching a someone wanted for a dangerous felony, Niello said.

The bill would not empower the illegal-dumping officers to carry firearms.

Shasta County officials have promised to make curbing illegal dumping a top priority. In October, the county received a \$20,633 grant to remove more than 250 cubic yards of trash, appliances, construction debris and tires from private land in the Burney area.

District Attorney Jerry Benito said only about a half-dozen offenders are prosecuted each year because they're so difficult to catch.

"Anything that will improve the enforcement aspect of it in the field is certainly worth looking at," he said.

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