

# Stop Trashing Our Air Act:

## Will Ending Philly's Use of Incineration Help or Hurt Philly Jobs and Unions?

- Union jobs in the city would increase as we switch from a non-union transfer station to one organized by the Teamsters.<sup>1</sup>
- Switching from Reworld (incineration and ash landfilling) to Republic (landfilling without incineration) means going from a set of waste facilities where Reworld has 23 official labor complaints to those where Republic has just four.<sup>2</sup>
- Passage of the Stop Trashing Our Air Act would impact just 14% of Philly's waste stream.<sup>3</sup>
- It will remove only 14% of the trash from the incinerator in Chester City and 4% from the incinerator in Montgomery County – not enough to impact many jobs.<sup>3</sup>
- The incinerator in Chester (the nation's largest) provides only 105 full-time jobs (mostly not for Chester residents); many of these jobs are necessary regardless of how much waste is processed.<sup>4</sup>
- Landfills provide 83% more jobs than incinerators for the same amount of waste.
- Operating Engineers Local 542 is trying to organize Reworld's Chester incinerator and Republic's Conestoga Landfill. If both succeed, the union is likely to gain more jobs than might be lost.

Philadelphia produces nearly 1.3 million tons of municipal solid waste (trash) per year. Almost half of that is collected by the city's Department of Sanitation (from residences with up to six units). The rest is managed by the private sector. There are two contracts for disposal of the trash collected by the city. The largest one (for 70% of the city-collected trash) is held by WM (Waste Management), where waste is mainly landfilled in Bucks County. The smaller contract for the other 30% is with Reworld (formerly named Covanta) for incineration, mainly in the City of Chester, but some is also burned at their incinerator in Plymouth Township, Montgomery County. Passage of the Stop Trashing Our Air Act would disqualify Reworld and most likely result in Republic landing the smaller contract. Republic would use two transfer stations they have in the city and haul it from there to two landfills in rural Berks and York Counties.

Our review of labor complaints filed against the transfer stations and disposal facilities of Reworld vs. Republic shows **nearly six times as many labor complaints against Reworld.**

Ending incineration will mean more jobs at Republic's unionized Quickway Transfer Station in Philly plus more trucking jobs to get waste out to the landfills in Berks and York Counties. The most recent report on jobs produced by incinerators vs. landfills shows that, for the same amount of waste processed, landfills in our region provide 83% more jobs than incinerators.<sup>5</sup>

**Zero Waste Jobs:** If we did as New York City is now doing and collect food scraps curbside for composting, we'd get 8-9 times more jobs. Recycling produces 10 times as many jobs in the sorting plants, and 25 times as many jobs in recycling-based manufacturing such as Newman Paper, a cardboard manufacturer in Philly. There are 60-300 times more jobs in reuse and repair of reusable discards.

Teamsters and SEIU released a report titled "More Jobs, Less Pollution," showing that diverting 75% of our trash and construction and demolition waste in the U.S. would create over one million more jobs (over 11,000 in Philly) than we have now from burning and burying these materials.<sup>6</sup>

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### Facilities involved:

#### Reworld:

- 58th St Transfer Station in Philly (non-union)
- Reworld Delaware Valley incinerator in Chester City, Delaware County (Operating Engineers Local 542 voted to unionize, but no contract yet)
- Reworld Plymouth incinerator in Plymouth Township, Montgomery County (Operating Engineers Local 542)

#### Republic:

- Quickway Transfer Station in Philly (Teamsters Local 115)
- Envirowaste Transfer Station in Philly (non-union)
- Conestoga Landfill in Berks County (Operating Engineers Local 542 trying to unionize, but no contract yet?)
- Modern Landfill in York County, PA (union status unknown)

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**For more information, contact Mike Ewall at 215-436-9511 or [mike@energyjustice.net](mailto:mike@energyjustice.net) or visit [www.PhillyZeroWaste.org](http://www.PhillyZeroWaste.org)**

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<sup>1</sup> Reworld's 58<sup>th</sup> St Transfer Station is non-union while Republic's Quickway Transfer Station is organized by Teamsters Local 115.

<sup>2</sup> See National Labor Relations Board case search: <https://www.nlrb.gov/search/case>

<sup>3</sup> Waste sent to incineration under the city's contracts is just 180,000 tons/year per the testimony of Carlton Williams, Director of Clean and Green Initiatives, at the 11/17/2025 hearing before the City Council Environment Committee on the Stop Trashing Our Air Act. Philadelphia sent a total of 1,281,069 tons of trash to PA disposal facilities in 2024, per PA DEP: [http://cedatareporting.pa.gov/reports/powerbi/Public/DEP/WM/PBI/Solid\\_Waste\\_Disposal\\_Information](http://cedatareporting.pa.gov/reports/powerbi/Public/DEP/WM/PBI/Solid_Waste_Disposal_Information)

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Incinerator sizes: <https://energyjustice.net/incineration/usplants/>; In Dec. 2020, Covanta admitted that just six full-time employees of the 105 at their incinerator in Chester are residents of Chester City. See <https://www.delcoej.org/pdf/CovantaRebutted.pdf#page=17>

<sup>5</sup> Institute for Local Self-Reliance, "Pay Dirt: Composting in Maryland to Reduce Waste, Create Jobs, & Protect the Bay," May 2013. <https://ilsr.org/paydirt/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://tellus.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/More-Jobs-Less-Pollution-Growing-the-Recycling-Economy-in-the-US.pdf>