

Shortly after taking office as California's Governor, following a tumultuous recall election in 2003, Arnold Schwarzenegger famously promised to "blow up the boxes" of state government in favor of a more streamlined governance structure. That commitment has since largely been sacrificed on the alter of ever-contentious California politics. But this summer's belated and painfully-negotiated California budget process has produced one major change in the state's environmental governance scheme: abolishment of California's Integrated Waste Management Board. And, on balance, that's probably a good thing.

The Integrated Waste Management Board was created by the California Legislature in 1989 to reduce the prodigious waste stream generated by the most populous state in the nation, encourage recycling, and oversee California landfills and other solid waste facilities. Worthy objectives all, to be sure.

The problem, however, lies with the Board's governance structure. The Board is directed by six appointed members, most of whom serve on a full-time basis and draw salaries of over \$100,000. From its inception, Board members—who are appointed by California's Governor and Legislature—have been drawn mainly from termed-out legislators and other political insiders. Many have no particular expertise regarding solid waste issues, and several have viewed their appointments as political sinecures requiring little of their time, attention or presence in Sacramento.

Compounding those deficiencies, numerous Board functions overlap those performed by another state agency—California's Department of Conservation—found in another corner of the state's extensive regulatory bureaucracy.

So it should come as no particular surprise that when the political dust cleared and California's political leaders finally adopted a state budget this summer, the Integrated Waste Management Board wound up a casualty: zero-budgeted, slated for abolition, and its regulatory duties transferred to the state Department of Conservation.

Several California environmental groups howled, claiming that elimination of the Board was politically motivated and part of an anti-environment, pro-business agenda. But calmer heads view this action as understandable and, indeed, long overdue.

The issue, as is often the case in environmental debates, is not about ends, but means. No one reasonably disputes that reducing the waste stream generated by 38 million Californians, promoting recycling and overseeing the safety of solid waste facilities in the state are vitally important objectives. But the Integrated Waste Management Board was never the logical vehicle to accomplish those ends. At a time when state and local

governments are being required to do more with fewer fiscal resources, no government agency or organizational model should be sacrosanct.

This is one effort at government reform that makes sense, one box worthy of being blown up. The Integrated Waste Management Board won't be missed.