



WASTE NOT

Washington Citizens for Resource Conservation

Spring 2003

LEGISLATION to RECYCLE ELECTRONIC WASTE INTRODUCED in WASHINGTON STATE

A combined effort by Washington Citizens for Resource Conservation, Basel Action Network, the Computer TakeBack Campaign (see next page), and local governments lead to the development of electronics producer responsibility legislation.

Introduced by Representative Mike Cooper (D-Edmonds) in February 2003, House Bill 1942: *An Act Relating to Electronic Waste* calls for electronics manufacturers to finance and arrange for the environmentally sound collection, recycling and disposal of computers, televisions, peripherals and cell phones. Regarding these electronic products, HB 1942 would:

- establish manufacturer-financed, convenient, no-cost collection and recycling by mid 2005
- phase out the use of lead (found in the cathode ray tubes in monitors and televisions), mercury, and certain other toxic materials by 2007
- prohibit disposal in landfills and incinerators after 2007
- mandate recycling information on labels or packaging, and
- establish state purchasing policies requiring vendor "take-back."

The legislation also encourages recyclers to end the practice of exporting hazardous e-waste.

Although HB 1942 was not moved out of the Fisheries, Ecology & Parks committee this year, it will be considered in the 2004 legislative session.

See WCRC's website at www.wastenotwashington.org for more detailed information about the legislation and producer responsibility.

GET YOUR COPY OF "A CITIZEN'S GUIDE TO PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY"

WCRC has produced a fun and informative *Guide* that describes the concept and practice of producer responsibility. The *Guide's* characters—Cal Consumer, Silicon CEO, Rosie Recycler, Xiao GongRen (Young Worker), and others—tell the story of electronic waste today, *with no producer responsibility*, and in the future, *with producer responsibility*.



A checklist of the present reality versus the future will make it clear that producer responsibility addresses the needs and interests of the consumer and the environment.

A Citizen's Guide can be viewed on WCRC's website. Copies can be obtained free-of-charge by emailing info@wastenotwashington.org or calling 206-441-1790. Call to make arrangements for bulk orders.

Seven Compelling Reasons to Hold Manufacturers Responsible for Electronic Waste

▶ **Electronic waste is a rapidly growing waste problem.** Given increased sales, shorter life spans, and the absence of an adequate recycling infrastructure, computers and other electronic products are commonly being stored in homes, schools, warehouses and offices. Cascadia Consulting Group in Seattle has estimated that Washington residents alone have stockpiled approximately 1.9 million computers, monitors, and televisions. By 2010, that number will grow to an estimated 5.5 million units.

▶▶ **Electronic waste is toxic.** Electronic products contain lead, mercury, chromium, brominated flame retardants, and other hazardous substances. Whether these products are landfilled, incinerated, or shipped to developing nations, they pose a very real threat to human health and the environment. Consumer electronics already constitute 40% of lead found in landfills, and about 70% of the heavy metals found in landfills comes from electronic equipment discards. (See a 2001 report, *Poison PCs/Toxic TVs*, by Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition, Californians Against Waste, and Materials for the Future.)



▶▶▶ **Electronic waste is shipped to developing countries.** Most domestic processors cannot attest to the ultimate disposition of the materials they collect for recycling. Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition estimates that as much as 50% to 80% of electronic equipment intended for recycling is actually shipped overseas for dismantling under horrific conditions. If manufacturers are responsible for taking their equipment back, they will think twice about how and where it is handled under their name. (cont'd on the next page)

Seven Compelling Reasons (cont'd)

▶▶▶▶ **Electronic waste is expensive.** Taxpayers, local governments, schools, charities, and end users currently bear the cost and responsibility for safely recycling or disposing obsolete computers and televisions. For example, to prevent landfill dumping of electronic waste, Snohomish County, Washington, recently financed a one-time "clean-out" of broken electronics from local school districts that resulted in 135 tons of material at a cost of \$55,000. *At this time of state and local government budget crises, governments simply cannot be asked to raise and expend funds to solve a private sector problem.*



▶▶▶▶▶ **Electronic waste is not easily recycled.** Only manufacturers have the ability to change the design of their products. Producer responsibility gives manufacturers a financial incentive to design "green" products, i.e., products that are easy to dismantle for recycling and contain fewer toxics.

▶▶▶▶▶▶ **Electronic waste recycling costs should be included in the product price.** The price of products already includes the cost of marketing, packaging, overhead, and transportation. Adding in the cost of recycling more accurately reflects a product's actual cost.

▶▶▶▶▶▶▶ **Voluntary efforts to deal responsibly with electronic waste create an uneven playing field.** Manufacturers who try to "do the right thing" by investing in non-toxic design and providing recycling options incur higher costs than their less responsible competitors. With rational regulations, however, responsible business behavior can provide a competitive advantage, making businesses more, rather than less, profitable.

The presence of toxic materials in electronic waste creates a problem that cannot be exported or ignored. Producer responsibility is the most equitable solution.

The Computer TakeBack Campaign

WCRC recently joined the Computer TakeBack Campaign (CTBC) — a national coalition of organizations promoting clean production and producer take-back of consumer electronics. Co-coordinated by Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition and GrassRoots Recycling Network, the Campaign seeks to protect the public health and the environment from the hazards of high-tech products by requiring manufacturers to take financial responsibility for the life-cycle impacts of their products.

The CTBC recently provided funds to both WCRC and the Basel Action Network to collaborate on these efforts in Washington state. A big thank you to the CTBC for supporting our work!

The Campaign's strategy of developing and advancing model electronics legislation facilitated the introduction of HB 1942 in Washington state (see front page for story), and some form of e-waste legislation in 23 other states.

Over the next year, **WCRC will organize a manufacturer responsibility coalition in Washington state**, made up of environmental and public health groups, local governments, schools, labor unions, charities, recyclers, businesses, and citizen activists. To learn more or to join this coalition, please contact Suellen Mele, Outreach Coordinator at 206-441-1790.

WHAT WOULD AN ELECTRONICS PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY SYSTEM REALLY LOOK LIKE?

Private sector manufacturers will have the opportunity to develop e-waste collection and recycling systems that effectively and efficiently meet their particular and individual needs.

Producer responsibility does not mean manufacturers will need to go into the processing or collection business. They can utilize existing haulers, charities and private recyclers.

An individual manufacturer can set up a recycling system or join other manufacturers to form a third party organization that would arrange for the collection, transportation, and processing/recycling of their products.

Some manufacturers (such as Dell) could implement "reverse distribution," which is basically running the electronics distribution system backward (thereby making recycling a computer as easy as buying one!).

Whatever system a manufacturer chooses, it is presumed that costs will be passed on to consumers by a small increase in product price. However, in an effort to be competitive, manufacturers will have a strong economic incentive to reduce end-of-life disposal and recycling costs. Additionally, mass recycling through statewide or national systems will lead to economies of scale.

As a result, the increase in product price will be less than the current fee to dispose of electronic equipment. Additionally, consumers will be confident that their electronic products are properly disassembled and recycled.

In 2002, the European Union passed a package of laws that requires manufacturers to take-back and recycle a wide array of e-waste starting in 2005. These laws also require manufacturers to phase out lead, mercury, and other toxics by 2006. *If electronic manufacturers with worldwide markets are developing environmentally sound practices in Europe, they can do so in the U.S. as well.*

Electronic Recycler's Pledge of True Stewardship



What happens to your computer after you drop it off for recycling? Most recyclers cannot guarantee the fate of your computer's toxic components. There are, however, four businesses in Washington (out of 19 nationally to date) who have taken the *Electronic Recycler's Pledge of True Stewardship* thereby agreeing: 1) not to export toxic waste to developing nations, 2) to prevent hazardous electronic waste from going to incinerators and landfills, and 3) to avoid the use of prison labor.

These recycling businesses are demonstrating what it means to be truly responsible!

- Total Reclaim, Seattle, 206-343-7443
- RE-PC, Seattle, 206-623-9151 and Tukwila, 206-575-8737
- PC Salvage, Tacoma, 253-460-8322
- The RE Store, Bellingham, 360-647-5921

Go to the websites for the Basel Action Network (www.ban.org), Computer TakeBack Campaign (www.computertakeback.com), or Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition (www.svtc.org) for more details.

TAKE ACTION! Determining how to responsibly recycle your personal computer provides the perfect opportunity to take action.

Call the manufacturer or retailer and ask them to take it back! The GrassRoots Recycling Network website page "Please Take Back My Computer!" (www.grn.org/action) has sample letters and suggestions on what to say.

If the manufacturer or retailer cannot help you, or asks that you pay to ship your computer back to them, register your complaint and request that they support producer responsibility. Call WCRC and tell us what you learned.



THANKS!

Members, Supporters and Volunteers

WCRC has worked for 25 years to conserve natural resources. Recently a number of terrific gains were made. In 2002-03, WCRC published *A Citizen's Guide*, supported electronic waste legislation in Washington state, joined the national Computer TakeBack Campaign, hired staff, established a new office, created a website, and obtained a grant from the Washington Department of Ecology to develop several electronics producer responsibility projects in 2003-2004.

Most importantly, over 200 supporters renewed their membership in 2002. *It is not an exaggeration to say that WCRC could not have accomplished any of its recent work without its members.* We would like to extend a special thanks to all contributing donors. You are helping to ensure that the current difficult economic times do not undo the crucial accomplishments of many environmental nonprofit organizations.

Finally, WCRC would like to thank its wonderful volunteers, especially Maria Fuertes for membership and database help, Tom Houston for web assistance, and Thom McDonald for technical services. *Maureen Newby, Coordinator*

Recycling, Reuse and Waste Reduction News

Washington Department of Ecology (DOE)—*Beyond Waste: Envisioning Our Solid Waste Future*

WCRC is excited to be an active player in developing DOE's 10—20 year hazardous and solid waste management "work plan."

Elements under consideration to become part of the plan include:

- encouraging the construction industry and industrial sector to adopt "green" building techniques through careful consideration of raw materials and design, management and packaging choices
- removing compostable organics from the waste stream and making them available as fertilizers and soil amendments
- reducing wholesale and retail packaging waste
- reducing material consumption in the residential sector by influencing purchasing behavior
- creating a "technical nutrient cycle" by developing ways to keep technical materials cycling through the economy while minimizing "downcycling" into lower value products, and
- aligning price signals to decrease wasteful behavior while re-aligning fees, taxes, and prices to provide incentives for "Beyond Waste" behavior.

Meetings to discuss these and other issues will begin in May 2003 and continue throughout the coming year.

City of Seattle — In 2001 the City of Seattle recycling rate was 38%, a long way from the City goal of a 60% recycling rate by 2008. Noting that recycling in Seattle has saved tens of millions of dollars in waste disposal costs since the program started in 1988, Mayor Nickels unveiled a plan in January 2003 to **attain the 60% recycling goal** by:

- expanding the curbside recycling program to all businesses
- banning certain recyclable materials in residential garbage
- adding a commercial food waste collection program, and
- phasing in a ban on recyclable paper in commercial garbage.



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CAL CONSUMER AFTER PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY:
"Computers are made better and safer now. They are easier to take apart and recycle. It used to cost to recycle, if you could find anyone to take it. But now the manufacturer covers all the costs...shipping, handling, disassembly and recycling. Now that's customer service!"



How You Can Help

- ◆ **WCRC is Looking for Some New Talent to Join Our Activist Board of Directors.** Support WCRC's mission with a contribution of 5-10 hours a month. Directors with skills in public relations, fundraising, or legislation are especially needed.
- ◆ **Volunteers are Welcome.** There are interesting opportunities for those who wish to help conserve Washington's resources, as well as for those who wish to develop their nonprofit management skills.
- ◆ **Do You Have Used Media — Books, CDs, DVDs, or Videos — to Donate?** Contact **Eco Encore** (206-547-1517 or www.ecoencore.org) to learn how to turn your used media into a financial contribution that supports a range of local environmental nonprofits, including WCRC.

SUPPORT WCRC

USE THE ENCLOSED REMITTANCE FORM TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP, TO JOIN, OR TO MAKE A SPECIAL CONTRIBUTION. THANK YOU!

WCRC IS A MEMBER OF EARTH SHARE OF WASHINGTON.

PLEASE CONSIDER MAKING A DONATION THROUGH YOUR WORKPLACE GIVING CAMPAIGN.

GO TO WWW.ESW.ORG FOR MORE INFORMATION.

FOUNDED IN 1980, WCRC IS A NON-PROFIT, CITIZEN-BASED ADVOCACY GROUP WORKING TO KEEP WASHINGTON A LEADER IN WASTE REDUCTION, RECYCLING AND USE OF RECYCLED PRODUCTS.

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WCRC Has MOVED

STOP BY WCRC'S NEW OFFICE IN DOWNTOWN SEATTLE DURING THE WEEK AND PICK UP "A CITIZEN'S GUIDE" OR OTHER RECYCLING INFORMATION.

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