

THE NATIONAL COMPUTER RECYCLING ACT

H.R. 1165

SUMMARY

Representative Mike Thompson, (Dem – Calif.) and Representative Louise Slaughter, (Dem –NY) have introduced a bill that would establish a grant \ fee program through the Environment Protection Agency to encourage and promote the recycling of used computers. The EPA would develop and implement a national electronic waste-recycling program (*E- WASTE*) that would promote the development of a national infrastructure for the recycling of used computers and for other purposes.

DISCRIPTION OF THE BILL

- 1) The Act would direct the EPA to develop a grant program to encourage municipalities, individuals and organizations to start e-waste recycling programs.
- 2) The EPA would be able to asses a fee of up to \$10 dollars on a new computers assessed to the consumer in order to fund the grant program and exempt manufactures and retailers that have existing recycling programs from the fee.
- 3) The bill requires a comprehensive e-waste study to be conducted by the EPA, which would make the ongoing recommendations for addressing the problem.
- 4) Lastly, the bill requires the Administrator of the EPA to be in full consultation with the manufactures, retailers, recycling agencies, waste management professionals, environmental and consumer groups and all other persons or appropriate groups.

PRO'S

- 1) Old computers contain harmful hazardous materials; the Act allows the EPA to dispose of old computers thoroughly.
- 2) The Act doesn't allow an individual to be charged for a used computer a one time fee for new computers,
- 3) The fees are very basic (\$10) that allows the EPA to be able to fund the program.
- 4) The Act does not allow more cost on the manufacturer (Dell or Microsoft) or the retailer (Best Buy or Ultimate Electronics).
- 5) The Act implements a responsibility to the EPA to oversee that computers are being recycled. (Management and oversight)

CONS

- 1) The Act puts the cost on the consumer and not the manufacturer.
- 2) Programs are difficult, because of lack of proper training, where some programs are harmful to people and the environment (China residents dismantling US consumer residents.
- 3) Currently businesses and other municipalities have been taking responsibility for recycling.
- 4) The Act does not acknowledge other electronics that are harmful such as cell phones and televisions.

- 5) Finally, the cost of ten dollars for all new computers could be seen as excessive to consumers.

BACKGROUND

Through the last decade electronics have helped advance our economic growth and improve our lives in countless ways. In 1998, 20 million personal computers became obsolete in 1998, only 13 percent were reused or recycled. The rapid change in electronic is good for the economy but it has an effect on the environment such as; lead, mercury, and hexavalent chromium, in circuit boards, batteries, and other cathode ray tubes (CRT). A recent study by the EPA showed that electronics are already making up 1 percent of the municipal solid waste stream, interesting this is three times the rate as of any other municipal waste (A study done by Europeans in Europe). In 1998, over 112 million pounds of materials were recovered from electronics, including steel, glass, and plastic, reusing and recycling as well as precious metals. By reusing and recycling the raw materials from end-of-life electronics conserves natural resources and avoids the air and water pollution.

Harmful cases

- ❑ When the United States sends its toxic materials to other countries we are putting others at risk.
- ❑ Currently, in the United States there is a large amount of e-waste collected and being disposed to markets in China, Pakistan, India and other third world countries. Because of the materials being stripped in other countries their land and water is being contaminated.
- ❑ In southeast China, wires are ripped out and then sorted. After they are sorted they are then burned which produces cancer-causing dioxins.
- ❑ Televisions and monitors contain four pounds of lead on average. Mercury from electronics has been cited as a leading source of mercury in municipal waste.

Other Steps that have been taken

- ❑ Environmental groups are asking that we ratify the Basel Convention, a global treaty that limits export of hazardous electronic waste; currently the United States has not ratified its treaty.
- ❑ One idea is to follow in the footsteps of Japan and other European countries that have phase-out programs for lead, cadmium, and beryllium in computers.
- ❑ There have been tax cuts to household and business's that donate their computer equipment, (The 21st Century Classrooms Act for Private Technology Investment) which encourages large companies to donate computer equipment.
- ❑ Recycling is just as easy, if your electronics cannot be reused or if repairing is not a viable option, you are able to recycle the electronics and have them recycled. There are a growing number of municipalities that are offering programs as well as public and private organizations have emerged that accept computers and other electronics for recycling.

List of Recyclers

- ❑ Recycling drop off centers
- ❑ TV repair shops
- ❑ Charitable organizations
- ❑ Electronics recycling company's
- ❑ Local electronic retailer

What are Consumer electronics?

- ❑ Televisions/monitors
- ❑ Computers and Peripherals
- ❑ Fax/ Copy Machines
- ❑ Audio / Stereo
- ❑ Cellular phones
- ❑ VCR's DVD Players and Video Camera's
- ❑ Telephones And Wireless Devices
- ❑ Video Game consoles