



H.R. 2284

The Responsible Electronics Recycling Act

The Challenge

Discarded computers, TVs, phones, and other consumer electronics (so-called electronic waste or e-waste) now comprise the fastest growing waste stream in the U.S. Rapid advances in technology mean that electronic products are becoming obsolete more quickly. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that in 2009 alone, the U.S. generated over 3.1 million TONS of e-waste.

The management of used electronics presents a number of significant environmental, health, and national security concerns. Much of the e-waste collected in the U.S. for alleged “recycling” or “reuse” is actually exported to developing nations such as China, Ghana, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Thailand for unsafe salvage and metals recovery. The GAO recently determined that most of these receiving countries lack the capacity to safely recycle and dispose of these discarded and used electronics.

By exporting these used products, we are also exporting recycling and repair jobs that could be held by U.S. workers. Many responsible recyclers in the U.S. operate under-capacity, undercut by brokers exporting e-waste to developing nations. These exports also fuel a growing counterfeit chip market in China that sells fake military grade chips into our military supply chain.

Although many countries, including those in the European Union, have developed laws to address electronic waste disposal and management, the United States does not have a comprehensive national approach for the export of used electronics. The Responsible Electronics Recycling Act of 2011 provides the regulatory framework needed to address this dire situation.

What This Bipartisan Legislation Would Do

H.R. 2284 prohibits the export of certain electronic waste from the U.S. to developing nations. Tested and working equipment can still be exported to promote reuse. This approach is consistent with the policy most other developed nations have adopted via international treaties such as the Basel Convention.

HR 2284 Restricts Exports of These Items:

- Used electronics that are not fully functional, or are not tested
- Shredded electronics containing specific toxic chemicals

HR 2284 Does Not Restrict These Items:

- Tested and working electronics exported for reuse
- Products under warranty
- Products being recalled
- Crushed cathode ray tube (CRT) glass cullet that is cleaned and prepared as feedstock
- Material streams (metals, glass, plastics) that do not contain hazardous chemicals
- Electronic parts of a motor vehicle

Importing countries must give their consent to accept all of the exempted exports. The bill also creates a research program for improving technology and capacity for recovering and recycling Rare Earth materials.

This legislation has been officially supported by: HP, Dell, Apple, Samsung, Best Buy, The Electronics TakeBack Coalition, the Natural Resources Defense Council and 29 recyclers representing 74 recycling operations in 34 states. Current Cosponsors: Gene Green, Mike Thompson, Steven LaTourette and Lee Terry.