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NEWS

ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH – GOVERNOR

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Governor Blagojevich Signs Landmark Recycling and Reuse E-Waste Law

New law is one of the nation's most aggressive in protecting the environment and public from toxic substances in electronic wastes and providing incentives for reuse

CHICAGO – In the absence of federal action by President Bush to protect the environment and the public from toxic chemicals in discarded electronics, Governor Rod R. Blagojevich today signed landmark legislation requiring electronics manufacturers to collect and recycle or reuse electronics products. Today's announcement comes on the same day the U.S. Government Accountability Office released a report on toxic electronic waste – or e-waste – dumping and scolded the U.S. EPA for failing to adequately address the problem of electronic products containing hazardous waste.

“Two years ago, I called on President Bush to do the right things and develop a national solution to all of the electronics being thrown out and contaminating our environment and putting public health at risk after a report from The National Safety Council predicted there would soon be more than 300 million obsolete computers in the nation,” said Governor Blagojevich. “Yet, two years later, the Bush Administration has failed to develop a comprehensive electronic waste collection and recycling system, so we have taken action on a state level.”

As one of the most comprehensive pieces of electronics collection and recycling legislation in the nation, Senate Bill 2313, sponsored by Sen. Susan Garrett (D-Highwood) and Rep. Elaine Nekritz (D-Des Plaines), protects the environment and citizens of Illinois from harmful toxins in electronics waste.

“I am proud to have sponsored this bill. Governor Blagojevich's leadership on this issue is to be commended and has made Illinois a leader across the nation on this front. When there is no national policy, this legislation finally addresses responsible recycling and reuse and disposal of electronic equipment, rather than wasting precious natural resources,” said Sen. Garrett.

At no charge to consumers, the law authorizes the use of a combination of incentives and mandates to reduce the ever-increasing amount of electronic waste – televisions, printers, computer monitors, computers, laptops, printers, fax machines and MP3 players – and their toxic substances, such as lead, cadmium, copper, flame retardants, and phosphorus, from being disposed in Illinois landfills. It also gives manufacturers flexibility in the strategies they use to meet their goals, such as partnering with retailers and local governments to sponsor collections. Manufacturers, recyclers, refurbishers and collectors must also register annually with the Illinois EPA.

“I am pleased to see Governor Blagojevich sign this legislation,” said Rep. Nekritz. “Old electronic equipment can contain highly toxic chemicals – so when it’s dumped into a landfill, those toxins become a part of our environment and the public can be exposed.”

Effective January 1, 2012, landfills would be prohibited from knowingly accepting any of the covered electronic devices for disposal.

Today’s action has won praise by both the electronics industry and advocacy groups for significantly increasing the volume of electronics that are recycled and reused, ultimately reducing the amount of equipment that goes to landfills.

“E-waste recycling will be easy for people, create new jobs for our state’s economy, and reduce toxic pollution of our environment. It’s a real win-win-win for Illinois,” said Howard Learner, executive director of the Environmental Law & Policy Center, which helped draft the legislation. “Illinois is now a national leader in solving the problem of e-waste, the fastest growing element of our country’s solid waste stream.”

Today’s efforts build on the Governor Blagojevich’s actions to further protect the environment and the public from e-waste. In 2006, the Governor signed an Executive Order directing state government to recycle electronic equipment – PCs and laptops, fax and copy machines, cellular phones and other e-waste – in an environmentally responsible manner when it reaches the end of its usable life, making Illinois the first state in the Midwest to implement electronic recycling policies.

“Many components of electronic equipment – including plastic, glass and metals – can be reused or recycled, which significantly reduces the amount of toxic and hazardous substances that may enter the environment,” said Illinois EPA Director Doug Scott. “By extending the useful life of products, we conserve energy and raw materials needed to manufacture new products and reduce the pollution associated with production. Recycling achieves similar results by reclaiming materials such as metals and plastics and using them again in other products.”

Governor Blagojevich followed-up by saying, “States cannot set export policy, but we made sure that the legislation signed today requires transparent reporting from manufacturers and recyclers on the end destination of any exported material. Our efforts here in Illinois are significant, but the exporting of electronic waste is on the rise and President Bush must begin to address this international issue on a national level.”

SB 2313 is effective immediately.