Electronic Waste:
Improving Standards and Support for Localities in Virginia

Reference: HB 344; Chapter 541, 2008 - Virginia WEEE - Code of Virginia §§ 10.1-1425.27 - 10.1-1425.38

Local jurisdictions in Virginia pay to ensure the safe recovery and disposal of electronic waste and the management of wastes containing hazardous components.

Virginia should consider creating effective electronics take-back Laws including:

- Tying e-waste legislation and the existing landfill ban legislation (§ 10.1-1425.26).
- Including televisions, tablets, cell phones and other hand-held electronic devices.
- Establishing and implementing actionable, measurable and effective methods to fund e-waste management services in Virginia.
- Supporting local municipal electronic waste (e-waste) management by covering the cost of drop-off and collection programs for residents.
- Requiring all e-waste processing and refurbishment vendors to comply with R2: 2013 or e-Steward standards and prohibiting the use of prison labor for e-waste processing.
- Requiring electronics manufacturers and retailers to fund convenient in-store or site-based recycling and take-back programs.
- Ensuring that all e-waste processing and refurbishment vendor, electronics manufacturer, and retailer take-back programs are subject to measurable performance standards and regularly scheduled reporting on collection volumes by category.

In 2008, the Virginia General Assembly passed HB 344 (Title 10.1-1425) requiring manufacturers of computer laptops, desktops, and monitors to establish take-back programs. Unfortunately, HB 344 excluded performance goals or convenience standards, which has resulted in Virginia having one of the lowest per-capita e-waste collection volume rates in the country. Virginia continues to consume and discard electronics at a fast pace, as evidenced by the high quantity of electronics in Virginia municipal waste disposal systems. According to EPA and Consumer Electronics Association analyses, e-waste generation is increasing:

- U.S. consumers were expected to purchase more than 1 billion devices in 2015.
- Electronics sales reached $285 billion in 2015, a 38% increase from 2013 in dollars spent on electronics
- This equates to approximately 24 devices per household (CEA, 2010; McCue, 2014; Nielson, 2014).

Nicolas' Computer Recovery & Recycling Act addresses about only 52% of electronics sent for disposal. (source -2015 assessment by Best Buy Inc.).

HB 344 does not include any requirement for recovering or recycling televisions. According to the Electronics Take Back Coalition, there are 25 states with “producer responsibility” laws for electronic waste. A review of the organization’s report on the quantity of e-waste collected in states with these laws shows that in 2013, Virginia had the lowest rate of recovery of any state included in the report.
Northern Virginia e-waste management provides environmental protection with a Significant Financial Burden

Northern Virginia localities provide costly e-waste recycling services to protect the environment reduce the impact of pollution associated with the disposal of electronics. Data regarding electronic waste collected for recycling by Northern Virginia localities is shown below.

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<tbody>
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<td>Prince William</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>580</td>
<td>627</td>
<td>699</td>
<td>697</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>645</td>
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<td>Arlington*</td>
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<td>82</td>
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<td>Fairfax County</td>
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<td>1642</td>
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<td>Manassas</td>
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<td>63</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>59</td>
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<tr>
<td>Falls Church**</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>12.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Northern VA</td>
<td>4,304</td>
<td>4,184</td>
<td>3,940</td>
<td>4,270</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Virginia</td>
<td>9,194</td>
<td>9,389</td>
<td>8,632</td>
<td>8,863</td>
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<tr>
<td>HB344 Manufacturer Collection, Statewide</td>
<td>2,126</td>
<td>1,590</td>
<td>1,109</td>
<td>633</td>
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</table>

*Arlington added curbside to ongoing special event collections in 2015.
**Falls Church encourages residents to use Fairfax County services.

No state or federal funding is available to support municipal e-waste recycling programs in Virginia. Virginia localities pay 100% of the recycling costs bearing the financial burden for residential e-waste in the state.

Although well-intended, HB 344 currently has the lowest national ranking of any statewide electronics recovery and disposal program. It has not succeeded in increasing the participation of manufacturers or retailers, or in a reduction in the volume of electronic waste sent to municipal waste management programs. In the face of rising the volume and costs associated with responsible recycling of e-waste; it is imperative that a review of the efficacy of HB 344 is undertaken to:

- increase manufacturer and retailer participation;
- provide clear and comprehensive monitoring of recycling program management and activity;
- support localities in meeting the needs of their residents and protecting the environment.

Resources:
- http://www.sustainelectronics.illinois.edu/policy/state.cfm
- http://www.deq.virginia.gov/Programs/LandProtectionRevitalization/