



A.7571 (SWEENEY, ET AL.)
S.2512 (THOMPSON)
S.5401 (THOMPSON, ET AL.)

Summary

This bill would require electronics manufacturers to collect and recycle or reuse their products at the end of the useful lives of same. The bill defines “manufacturers” of electronic equipment to include entities that assemble, sell, import or own a brand name that is sold in New York State. This measure would require manufacturers to submit and implement for Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) approval an electronic waste (e-waste) management plan by 2011. By 2016, manufacturers would be required to collect a minimum of 25 percent of annual equipment sales (by weight) each year, and increase that collection rate to 45 percent by 2018. Manufacturers would also be prohibited from imposing collection fees on consumers. The bill would prohibit the disposal of electronic equipment in traditional solid waste disposal systems, unless the facility is permitted to accept such waste.

Explanation

According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, more than two million tons of used electronics were discarded nationwide in 2005, with less than 15 percent recycled, and the balance ending up in landfills or incinerators. That same year, an estimated 130,000 computers were discarded daily. The expected switch from analog to digital TV broadcasts this year could potentially encourage millions of consumers to discard their old television sets. Adding to the rising flood of e-waste are the estimated hundreds of millions of pieces of electronics stockpiled by consumers and businesses, waiting to enter the waste stream. And rapid changes in computers and other new technologies add to the volume of e-waste every day.

E-waste is an environmental hazard. Computer monitors and older TV picture tubes contain on average five pounds of lead and require special handling upon disposal. In addition, these items are often riddled with toxics and known carcinogens, such as chromium, cadmium, mercury, beryllium, nickel, zinc and brominated flame retardants. When electronics are not disposed or recycled properly, they pose a major threat to public health and the environment. In addition, a growing portion of the state’s e-waste is exported to developing countries where irresponsible disposal and scavenging result in negative impacts on human and environmental health. Furthermore, reducing and recycling the raw materials in many electronics conserves natural resources and reduces air and water pollution. This bill would do much to address the state’s growing e-waste challenge while protecting New Yorkers and the health of our natural resources by updating the state’s solid waste management policies.

Environmental Advocates of New York strongly supports this bill.

Memo 24