

EDUCATION

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SENATOR Löki Gale Tobin

Education Committee Chair

Senate Bill 175 Electronic Device Recycling Sponsor Statement

Senate Bill 175 creates a manufacturer-funded system for collecting and recycling electronic devices. Flat-screen televisions, computer monitors, and other electronic devices have grown integral to modern life, business, and education. With ever more devices, there is a growing problem of electronic waste in Alaska.

SB 175 introduces the practice of product stewardship for electronic devices sold in Alaska. Product stewardship is a program where the manufacturer of an electronic device assumes financial responsibility on a life-cycle basis for that device. Manufacturers would allocate funding to cover collection and recycling activities. These costs are currently borne by communities, non-profit organizations, Tribes, and businesses.

Electronic waste associated with human health risks includes lead used in the cathode ray tubes found in computer and TV screens, cadmium used in rechargeable computer batteries, contacts and switches, and mercury used in the liquid crystal displays of mobile phones and flat screen computer monitors as well as in switches, batteries and fluorescent lamps. These components are especially problematic in rural Alaska where community landfills are often unlined, allowing harmful chemicals to be released into local waters. Landfill fires that include electronic devices can cause smoke inhalation hazards in communities.

If SB 175 passes, Alaska will join half the states in the nation, Canada and many other countries in having a product stewardship law. Under SB 175 a manufacturer offering electronic devices covered under this bill for sale in Alaska would register with the Department of Environmental Conservation and allocate funding for the collection and recycling of devices proportional to the volume of their sales. Manufacturers would register individually or join a clearinghouse that specializes in implementing these programs and dividing the costs of the program among manufacturers. This will create a funding stream to cover the costs of collection, transportation and recycling which is currently funded by a mix of grants and local tax revenue.

SB 175 was developed by the Alaska Solid Waste Task Force. Stakeholders in the task force include the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, Kawerak Incorporated, and Zender Environmental. SB 175 is supported by the Alaska Federation of Natives, the Solid Waste Association of North America as well as numerous communities, organizations, and businesses.