

April 14, 2005

Dear Senator/Representative:

EPA estimates that more than 2 million tons of used electronics are thrown away each year. Much of this equipment is disposed of improperly, causing serious environmental problems. We at Consumers Union, the publisher of *Consumer Reports* magazine, just completed a new study on this growing problem entitled; "Electronic Waste: Finding Sustainable Solutions that Work Better for Consumers." This paper can be found on our technology policy hub www.HearUsNow.org, along with practical tips to help consumers dispose of or donate their unwanted household electronics.

More than 300 million computers are considered obsolete today. As many as 100 million cell phones are replaced each year, yet less than one percent is being recycled. Faced with a limited and fragmented recycling and reuse infrastructure, consumers are storing old computers, cell phones and other electronic equipment in their homes or discarding them with their regular trash.

When electronic goods enter the municipal waste stream, they release harmful toxics. In fact, according to EPA, electronic waste is the largest single source of lead contamination in municipal landfills today. Such harmful contaminants wind up in our air, water, and food supplies.

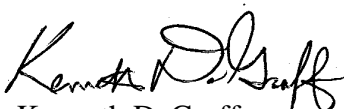
Limited, inconvenient, and costly reuse/recycling options aren't the only reason we have an electronic waste problem. Another contributor is that still-functioning equipment is rendered obsolete by a range of factors including product incompatibilities and design that limits repairs and upgrades.

Clearly, industry involvement, consumer education and environmental protections all must play a role in helping to reduce the volume and toxicity of electronic waste, to improve consumer options for recycling and to eliminate barriers to longer product life expectancy. We hope our paper stimulates debate on this critical issue, including raising awareness for the need to develop a national product take-back system designed to spur industry to eliminate toxics, use more recycled materials and remove obstacles to equipment upgrades and repairs.

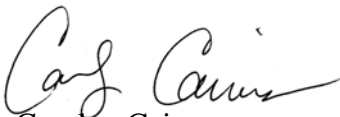
We look forward to working with you to help reduce electronic waste. If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to call either Kenneth DeGraff or Carolyn Cairns.

The paper is available at <http://www.hearusnow.org>.

Sincerely,



Kenneth DeGraff
Policy Advocate



Carolyn Cairns
Senior Project Leader

Consumers Union
1666 Connecticut Ave NW #310
Washington, DC 20009
202-462-6262

101 Truman Avenue
Yonkers, NY 10703
914-378-2303