

# COMPUTER TAKEBACK CAMPAIGN PLATFORM

(Developed by the Electronics Take it Back! Campaign, March 3-5, 2001, in Washington, D.C.)

Discarded electronic equipment is one of the fastest growing waste streams in the industrialized world, due to the growing sales and rapid obsolescence of these products. Electronic equipment is also one of the largest known sources of heavy metals and organic pollutants in the waste stream. Without effective phase-outs of hazardous chemicals and the development of effective collection, reuse and recycling systems, highly toxic chemicals found in electronics will continue to contaminate soil and groundwater as well as pollute the air, posing a threat to wildlife and people.

The Computer TakeBack Campaign supports the guiding principle called Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for post-consumer electronics waste. The objective of EPR is to make brand name manufacturers and distributors financially responsible for their products when they become obsolete. Our ultimate aims are pollution prevention and waste avoidance through a hierarchy of practices, including source reduction, reuse, re-manufacturing and recycling.

Currently, the expense of collecting, managing and disposing of discarded electronics -- including household hazardous waste collection and hazardous waste site cleanup -- is borne by taxpayer-funded government programs, primarily at the local level. We support having manufacturers and distributors assume responsibility for these costs, so that they can be internalized and reflected in product prices. This creates a powerful incentive for manufacturers of electronics to reduce such costs by designing products that are clean, safe, durable, reusable, repairable, upgradable, and easy to disassemble and recycle.

Companies that innovate more quickly will end up being more competitive than those that delay. Many companies in countries throughout Europe and Asia are already implementing EPR programs in response to government regulations.

In order to achieve the vision of electronics EPR, we have adopted the following platform:

## **TAKE IT BACK, MAKE IT CLEAN!**

### **Take it Back Principles**

- ***Financial and/or physical responsibility.*** Manufacturers and distributors of electronic equipment must take financial and/or physical responsibility for their products throughout the entire product lifecycle, including in particular take-back and end-of-life management. This responsibility must include:
  - \* reduced use of hazardous materials in manufacturing;
  - \* collection, disassembly, reuse and recycling of discarded computer equipment to the highest degree practicable; and
- \* requirements that recycling is done in an environmentally sound manner.
- ***Infrastructure development.*** EPR will foster development of effective, environmentally sound and sustainable infrastructure for collection, re-use, re-manufacturing and recycling of electronic equipment.
- ***Stop hazardous waste exports.*** The federal government should ban exports of hazardous materials from discarded electronic waste equipment.

- **Taxpayer relief.** We oppose efforts to force taxpayers to pay for electronic waste collection, recycling and disposal through local government initiatives, such as household hazardous waste programs.
- **Community re-investment.** The recycling infrastructure developed under an electronics "take back" system should support local economic development in domestic reuse, re-manufacturing and recycling processing systems.
- **Internalize costs.** EPR internalizes "end-of-life" management costs in the price of electronic equipment by shifting the burden from taxpayers to industry, so that those with effective "take-back" and recycling programs are not put at a competitive disadvantage.
- **Recycling goals.** The electronics industry should meet aggressive recycling goals and implement methods for tracking and publicizing success.
- **Design for the environment.** Manufacturers of electronic products should develop and use safer, less toxic materials; design for durability, upgradability and disassembly; avoid designing 'disposable' products; and reduce consumption of water and energy resources throughout the product lifecycle.
- **Closed-loop recycling.** The electronics industry should design products to be easily repaired and upgraded to extend their useful life; incorporate recycled content and remanufactured components into new products; and develop closed materials cycles.

### Zero Waste

- The goal is to ban all discarded electronic equipment from going to landfills or trash incinerators and to end environmentally unsound recycling practices.

### Make It Clean

- **Adopt the Precautionary Principle.** Where there is a threat to health or the environment, a precautionary approach requires taking preventive action even before there is conclusive scientific evidence that harm is occurring. The federal government should develop and implement strict protocols for testing chemicals and mixtures before they are introduced into the markets.
- **Phase-out hazardous materials.** The electronics industry should end the use of chemicals that are dangerous to human health or the environment (including lead, mercury, cadmium, brominated flame retardants, chlorinated solvents, and other hazardous materials).
- **Proper handling of hazardous materials.** Manufacturers of electronic products should protect workers, the public and the environment from hazardous materials until safer substitutes are developed and used.

### Fair Labor

- **Protect workers.** The electronics industry should apply stringent occupational health and safety standards to manufacturing and recycling facilities throughout the product chain; eliminate exploitation of workers in prisons and within manufacturing facilities throughout the world; and end unsafe labor practices.
- **Fair pay.** The electronics industry should institute livable wages for all workers throughout the product chain, including sub-contractors.
- **The right to organize.** The electronics industry should recognize the rights of workers to organize at electronic equipment manufacturing plants and recycling facilities throughout the product chain.