

Testimony in support of Wisconsin's Electronic Recycling Bill: Senate Bill 397
By Neil Peters-Michaud, CEO and Founder
Cascade Asset Management, LLC
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Senator Miller, thank you for this opportunity to speak to this committee in support of electronics recycling. By enacting this legislation, Wisconsin will accelerate the safe and sustainable recycling of electronic equipment to help protect our environment and generate recoverable resources. It will also directly reduce taxpayer subsidies of electronics disposal and create lasting, valuable service and manufacturing jobs in the state.

As the owner of Cascade Asset Management, an electronic equipment reuse and recycling company in Madison, I have a keen interest in any legislation related to electronics recycling. Cascade has collected and processed for reuse or remarketing more than 37 million pounds of old electronics since 1999. We are a part of a growing number of responsible processors converting computer cast-offs into valuable resources.

Unfortunately, relatively few people and institutions seek out legitimate recovery operations because of the lack of access to collection programs, the relatively high cost of recycling, and the absence of a landfill ban pertaining to household electronics. The US EPA estimates that in 2005, of the approximately 2 million tons of unwanted electronics generated each year, only about 350,000 tons (or 17.5%) is recycled. The rest are either landfilled, passed onto others, or stored in basements and closets to be dealt with another day.

This bill helps to address this deficiency in our electronics recycling infrastructure by creating a sustainable financing mechanism to pay for the collection and responsible processing of unwanted electronic equipment. It does this by shifting the burden of infrastructure development from the taxpayer, the current source of financing in the absence of better alternatives, to the manufacturers and their consumers – the people who directly benefit from the use of this technology.

This legislation also promotes sustainable economic development in Wisconsin. The Institute on Local Self Reliance indicated that recycling operations promote ten times more jobs than if items were landfilled or incinerated. But this is even more the case in the electronics recycling industry. This same organization indicated that computer reuse activities generate 296 jobs for every 10,000 tons of equipment processed per year, compared to only 1 job required to landfill the same amount of waste.

No where do I see these data more true to life than in my own business. Eight years ago, the three founders of Cascade were responsible for all aspects of our operation. Now, Cascade Asset Management employs over 80 individuals to collect and process approximately 10 million pounds of equipment each year. In addition, we generate more than 150,000 pounds of clean cathode ray tubes each month to be processed by a Wisconsin recycler, who in turn employs numerous individuals to manage our material. Scrap metal is shredded and sorted by a Wisconsin auto shredder and broker and then sold on global markets. Plastic has been sent to an Oshkosh extruder who can manufacture value added, co-injection molded consumer products for a Wisconsin based firm that sells these products globally. Reusable printer components are sold to one of several Madison printer refurbishers who rebuild housings and install new fusers for thousands of customers around the world. Cascade itself sends 80% of its usable computer equipment to overseas markets where demand for low cost, but reliable technological equipment is strong.

In addition, all of these businesses purchase services and equipment from other Wisconsin firms and generate millions of dollars of tax revenue for the state. The web of job creation throughout Wisconsin from the relatively small amount of computer equipment passing through Cascade's doors is impressive.

Senate Bill 397 will help to accelerate this economic growth by favoring responsible, local processing over sham recycling from overseas brokers. It will stimulate job growth

in the transportation, recycling, and manufacturing sectors. It will allow us to harvest raw materials from within our state to create new products marketed around the world.

We know responsible recycling can work. A basic infrastructure for electronics recovery has been developed to support the business community in Wisconsin, which is already restricted from disposing of e-waste in landfills. A computer monitor from a home contains just as many toxic elements and valuable resources as one from Harley-Davidson. By including household electronics in a landfill ban, we will vastly expand the amount of electronics entering recovery markets, and can do so at a reduced taxpayer expense. In turn, the electronics recycling industry will continue to innovate and create efficiencies to drive down costs for all involved, both businesses and individuals.

In summary, this legislation will provide true environmental benefit, a growth in clean technology jobs, reduced taxpayer subsidies, and a stronger manufacturing sector. I encourage you to pass this bill, so we can get to work for you.