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Press Contact: Kate Slusark, NRDC, 212/727-4592

City Council Overrides Mayor's Veto of Electronics Recycling Law

Rejects Bloomberg's Attempt to Remove Benchmarks Vital for a Strong Program

NEW YORK (May 14, 2008) – City Council today voted to override Mayor Michael Bloomberg's veto of a bill (Intro. 729) that sets performance standards for manufacturers participating in the city's new, first-of-its-kind electronics recycling program.

By a vote of 44-3, the City Council overwhelmingly rejected the mayor's veto of Intro. 729. The bill is intended as a companion to Intro. 728, which the mayor signed into law last month, making New York the first city in the nation to address the proliferation of e-waste by mandating that manufacturers take their products back from the city residents for responsible recycling. Intro. 729 contains the teeth of the legislation, requiring that manufacturers achieve demonstrated minimum collection targets.

Here is a statement from Kate Sinding, Senior Attorney for the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC):

"New York City and the Council made history first when it established its electronics recycling program – and again today when the Council voted to override the mayor's veto.

"The City Council deserves praise for standing up for a strong, effective electronics recycling program for all New Yorkers.

"The benchmarks in the bill would hold manufacturers responsible by making sure they collect a minimum amount of the covered electronic products they sell in the City and encouraging them to develop the most effective collection programs.

"The performance standards in Intro. 729 are reasonable, achievable and perfectly legal. We believe they would easily survive any court challenge.

"With the passage of these two bills, New Yorkers concerned about keeping their old electronics out of landfills and incinerators now have a clear, simple and reassuring answer to the question: 'What do I do with my old iPod, TV, or computer?'"

Julien Terrell, WE ACT's housing and health coordinator, thanked the NRDC for their support and primary lobbying on this legislation and added the following statement:

"No matter where this e-waste ends up under existing law, toxic heavy metals such as mercury, lead, arsenic and chromium are released – either as leachate that pollutes soil and groundwater or air pollution in the case of incinerators – into the environment. Because solid waste disposal facilities are primarily located in, or create airborne pollution drifts to, low-income communities of color, our communities are disproportionately impacted by this pollution.

"With the Congressional mandate for TV stations to broadcast only in high-definition by next year, the volume of e-waste will increase greatly as consumers discard their analog televisions and associated equipment. This new law will send a strong message of New York City's strong commitment to a comprehensive effort to protect the environment and health of *all* its citizens."