

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

Resolution Re-Adopted July 28, 2009

Resolution in Support of Mercury Fluorescent Lamp Recycling

Issue: Recycling of mercury fluorescent lamp and lights.

Proposed policy: NACo supports maximizing the collection and recycling of mercury-containing fluorescent lamps through a financing system that includes working with the fluorescent lamp industry and other stakeholders, that effectively covers the cost of collection, transportation, and recycling, without relying solely on state and local governments.

Background: Mercury is hazardous to human health and our environment and steps have been taken to reduce mercury contamination of our land, air and water. Despite their value for energy efficient lighting, fluorescent lamps containing mercury are banned from the waste stream in many states because of this hazardous component. In addition, there is a recycling industry in the nation to recover the mercury, glass and other materials and reuse them in manufacturing processes. Therefore, it is important to maximize the collection and recycling of mercury-containing fluorescent lamps to reduce their negative impact on the environment.

Hazardous waste management is costly to state and local governments. Properly managing fluorescent lamps at the end of their useful lives through a process that considers the perspectives of all relevant stakeholders is a shared responsibility. The stakeholders would benefit from understanding the lifecycle costs and benefits related to the "retirement" of collected mercury, which is often put back into mercury products.

Through this shared responsibility and understanding, a financing system can be developed that effectively covers the cost of collection, transportation, and recycling of lamps without relying solely on local and state governments to pay these expenses.

A Congressional proposal would preempt states from devising financing mechanisms for lamp recycling by prohibiting manufacturer responsibility. Although the goal of increasing recycling of mercury-containing fluorescent lamps is an important and fully supported goal, limiting state and local governments on a fair and effective financing system would likely burden local governments with additional costs.

Fiscal/Urban/Rural Impact: Passage of legislation to increase recycling of mercury-containing fluorescent lamps is positive, but if the legislation includes language that would preempt states from including manufacturer responsibility, it would limit financing options and likely burden local governments with added expenses associated with mercury fluorescent lamp recycling.

Submitted by: Commissioner Victoria A. Reinhardt, Ramsey County, Minnesota