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Narragansett Town Council Approves Resolution In Support Of Producer Responsibility

NARRAGANSETT – Last night, the Narragansett Town Council voted unanimously to pass a resolution in support of a framework extended producer responsibility approach to waste management for the State of Rhode Island. Councilwoman Susan Cicilline-Buonanno introduced the resolution.

Producer responsibility redefines the way municipal waste is managed. Traditionally, the cost of waste management is borne solely by municipalities, who pass those costs down to residents in the form of taxes. In contrast, producer responsibility places the primary obligation and control of product end-of-life management with the producer, who builds those costs into the price of the product. This approach results in a significant decrease in costs for cities and towns and ensures that convenient and efficient recycling and disposal services are available to all. Beyond that, producer responsibility encourages product design innovation and foments small business growth in the recycling sector, which results in the creation of green jobs.

Rhode Island currently has three such laws on the books. The collection of mercury auto switches, electronic waste, and mercury thermostats are managed through programs that are created and funded by manufacturers. These three pieces of legislation define producer responsibility policies for specific item, but crafting laws in this fashion is time consuming and legislatively inefficient. Framework legislation would create a means to identify products and create subsequent management policies in a much more timely and efficient fashion.

“A framework approach takes what we have learned through the management of individual products and applies it to a wide range of goods,” said John Berard, campaign organizer for Clean Water Action. “It is the next step in the natural progression of producer responsibility policies.”

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Framework approaches to product stewardship have been successful elsewhere, particularly in Canada. Ontario, Manitoba, and British Columbia have all enacted successful framework laws for managing waste, and the Canadian government is currently exploring the feasibility of a national framework policy. Earlier this year, Maine became the first state in the United States to pass framework producer responsibility legislation, and similar legislation has been introduced in five other states: California, Minnesota, Oregon, Vermont, and Washington.

“It is the towns and cities of this state who pay for the old, inefficient system of waste management,” continued Berard, “so it is appropriate that they are the ones who are urging the General Assembly into action. We praise the Town of Narragansett for their proactivity in this matter.”