

NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES

Energy, Environment and Natural Resources Committee  
Resolution  
Adopted November 14, 2009

PRINCIPLES FOR PRODUCT STEWARDSHIP

**WHEREAS**, solid waste, packaging materials, and the transportation of products and product materials contribute to greenhouse gas emissions; and

**WHEREAS**, an average of 254 million tons of trash are produced each year in the United States; and

**WHEREAS**, over 75 percent of consumer waste consists of products and packaging which contains, for example, acids, plastics, petroleum by-products, mercury, and other heavy metals that undermine public health and the environment when not properly disposed; and

**WHEREAS**, marine debris, such as the Great Pacific Ocean Garbage Patch, comprised of plastic bags, bottles and cans, bottle caps and lids, and cigarette filters, enters our waterways because of limited recycling options and mismanagement and proliferation of plastic products and packaging; and

**WHEREAS**, local governments across the nation are adversely affected by the rising costs of ensuring the safe management, recyclability, and disposal of consumer waste; and

**WHEREAS**, manufacturers and others along the product chain are able to reduce the environmental impact of their products and reduce the amount of trash directed to landfills by creating and financing take-back programs, reducing packaging, and designing products to be less toxic and easier to recycle; and

**WHEREAS**, state and local governments have adopted principles of product stewardship and developed agreements with industry and environmental groups to reduce adverse health and environmental impacts from consumer products; and

**WHEREAS**, to ensure the well-being of the public and the environment, an increasing number of states are exploring extended producer responsibility framework legislation in an effort to relieve local governments of growing waste management costs.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the National League of Cities (NLC) urges Congress to protect and support the ability of local and state governments to establish producer responsibility legislation.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that NLC urges Congress and the Administration to adopt the following principles of product stewardship so as to guide federal policy and support

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local governments in their efforts to ensure the protection of the public health and that of the environment:

### **1) Producer Responsibility**

The responsibility for reducing product environmental impacts should be shared by all segments of the industry, including designers, manufacturers, importers, retailers and conveyors of products and product components. Manufacturers, however, have the greatest ability to minimize product lifecycle impacts and consequently bear the greatest responsibility for addressing those impacts.

### **2) Internalize Costs**

All product lifecycle costs should be included in the total product cost. The environmental costs of product manufacture, use, and disposal should be minimized, to the greatest extent possible, and ultimately assumed by the manufacturers and consumers of products. Local governments and tax payers should be relieved of the financial burden of product and packaging management.

### **3) Incentives for Cleaner Products and Sustainable Management Practices**

Policies that promote and implement product stewardship principles should create incentives for manufacturers to design and produce “cleaner” products that are created using less energy, materials, and toxics. These policies should create incentives for the development of sustainable and environmentally-sound producer-led systems to collect, reuse, and recycle products.

### **4) Flexible Management Strategies**

Those responsible for reducing the health and environmental impacts of products should have the flexibility to determine the most cost-effective means of doing so. Performance measures are critical to determining the success and effectiveness of these programs.

### **5) Roles and Relationships**

Industry must take the lead in achieving these goals, but all levels of government and consumers must also play a role. Government should promote product stewardship through procurement practices, technical assistance, market development, and agency coordination. Government should also remove regulatory barriers that impede product stewardship and provide incentives and disincentives when necessary. To the greatest extent possible, these product stewardship principles should apply to those industries and vendors located in any country who sell their products in the United States. Industry and government should provide consumers with the information they need to make responsible environmental purchasing, reuse, recycling, and disposal decisions.