



Senator Peggy Lehner
6th Ohio Senate District

GUEST COLUMN

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Containing the Growing Problem of E-Waste

By State Senator Peggy Lehner

Much like the rest of the world, Ohio has benefited from a number of extraordinary advances in technology. These changes have allowed us to become more productive, and in many ways, have afforded us greater ease in our daily lives. Unfortunately, there has been a growing downside associated with this rapid technological change as millions of obsolete electronic devices, known as electronic waste, has been piling up in households and communities throughout America.

Recent estimates show that 17.3 million tons of computer-related waste has accumulated over the past 30 years. Not only has this E-waste accounted for mountains of old, out-dated electronic equipment, but it is beginning to pose a grave threat to the quality of our land, air, and water. Many of these devices often contain substantial amounts of toxic materials like lead and mercury, and it has become clear that something must be done in order to address this situation.

Fortunately, through recycling, not only is it possible to abate much of the threat posed by outdated electronics, but we can reclaim and reuse most of the raw materials. On average, 98-percent of a computer is recyclable. From the plastic or aluminum casing to the internal metal circuitry, we can recycle nearly every component contained in these products.

That is why I recently introduced legislation to tackle this relatively new, yet growing, problem. I was approached by Dell Computer to work on this legislation. Dell has been a leader in promoting company responsibility for recycling their products and they have been joined by many other manufactures in this effort. I think it is really admirable that the industry itself is taking the lead in this initiative.

Senate Bill 253 provides the public with a convenient, free and market driven means to responsibly dispose of unwanted electronic equipment. If enacted, the measure would require any manufacturer who sells computer equipment in Ohio to create a free take-back program to recycle e-waste. There are also provisions in place to ensure that consumers are provided with information on how to properly dispose of the out-dated equipment that is currently being stored in attics and basements across the state. Consumers can be assured that all products will be safely recycled and any toxic materials appropriately handled.

Thus far, 25 other states have considered similar legislation and I believe that this bill proposes best possible fit for Ohio in that it balances environmental and business concerns while remaining exceptionally consumer-friendly. The time has come to deal with Ohio's e-waste problem and I ask that you join me in voicing your support on this legislation.

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Senator Lehner represents Ohio's 6th Senate District which includes a portion of Montgomery County. She currently serves as Chairwoman for the Senate Education Committee.