

**Testimony of Representative Mike Thompson (D-CA)**

**Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
Subcommittee on Government Management, Organization and Procurement**

**“IT Procurement and Disposal: Application of the Federal Government’s Green Policies in  
the Life Cycle Management of its IT Assets”**

**October 27, 2009**

Thank you, Madame Chairwoman, for the opportunity to speak today on IT procurement and disposal practices within the federal government. I applaud the subcommittee’s work and interest on important issue. My own particular interest in this subject concerns the disposal of end-of-life IT components or “e-waste,” as it’s commonly referred to. This is a subject that I’ve been involved with since I was first elected to Congress. I am the founding member of the E-Waste Working Group on Capitol Hill. In past Congresses, our group has introduced comprehensive legislation on e-waste, participated in hearings on the subject, convened stakeholder meetings and released a bipartisan concept paper, which set forth an outline of a federal extended producer responsibility e-waste law.

As we all know, electronic products are becoming smaller and lighter, but they are also creating an ever-growing environmental and waste disposal problem. Today, the average lifespan of a computer is only two years, which is creating an avalanche of e-waste. More often than not, these discarded items wind up in the landfills of developing countries, where the waste becomes not just an environmental issue but a moral one as well. In the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress, I have been working with my friend and colleague, Gene Green, on legislation that would ban the export of U.S. e-waste to developing countries. I wish I could say that federal government property is never disposed of in this manner – but as the photo(s) I hereby submit for the record depict, that is not the case.

As a Subcommittee Chairman on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, I am especially concerned about the security of e-waste disposal of property assigned to the U.S. intelligence community and the potential for counterintelligence exploitation of these items. In

the Manager's Amendment to H.R. 2701, the Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010, I was able to add language requesting a threat assessment report on such practices.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has estimated in the past that the entire federal government alone discards 10,000 computers each week. And so in the absence of a national framework for managing the growing mountain of computers, monitors and televisions that have become obsolete, I strongly believe that the federal government should lead by example.

To this end, in 2005, I introduced a concurrent resolution, which would have expressed the sense of Congress that Congress and other legislative branch offices should work together to establish and implement a coordinated program for the reuse, recycling, and appropriate disposal of e-waste by offices of the legislative branch. In the coming days, I plan to reintroduce a similar resolution, and hope to have your support.

Thank you for bringing much needed attention to this issue and to allow us to gather expert testimony on it.