Opening Statement of Rep. Ralph M. Hall
Committee on Science and Technology
Electronic Waste: Investing in Research and Innovation to Reuse, Reduce, and Recycle
February 11, 2009

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased we are having this hearing today. Sixty-three years ago this week, the United States Army unveiled the world's first general-purpose electronic computer. The Electronic Numerical Integrator and Computer, or ENIAC (in-e-ack), was designed to be capable of solving a full range of computing problems. ENIAC took up 680 square feet of space, weighed 30 tons, and consumed 150 kilowatts of power. We have obviously come a long way since February 14, 1946. As electronic products have become faster and more reliable, they have also become significantly smaller and more disposable.

Blackberry devices, iPods, cell phones and other small electronics are rapidly replaced by newer models with more gadgets. Computers and laptops provide a level of

computational ability that is hardly used by most people, yet still highly sought after in the marketplace. Advances in flat-screen technologies have led to a new generation of televisions. With each new technological advance and model replacement, we face an inevitable problem of electronic waste, or e-waste.

There are many aspects of the e-waste dilemma: the definition of e-waste; reuse and recycling of electronics; landfill disposal and hazardous waste; regulatory issues and export economies. The EPA has already instituted several programs to deal with these problems. They include:

- EPA's Product Stewardship which supports stakeholder dialogues, pilot programs, public education and international cooperation to foster coordination of electronics reuse and recycling.
- EPA's Design for the Environment Program which works with electronics manufacturers to incorporate environmental considerations into product design.

- EPA's Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Program which helps federal agencies purchase environmentally preferable products.
- The Energy Star Program which promotes energy-efficiency products through a labeling campaign.
- EPA's WasteWise Program which challenges its partners to set goals for reducing e-waste.

I am grateful to the Chairman for circulating the discussion draft we have before us today and bringing this topic to the forefront. I am curious to see how some provisions in the draft fit with existing programs already at EPA. Clearly, none of us wants to duplicate efforts already underway as we try to effectively and efficiently deal with this challenge.

I am intrigued with a number of aspects of this bill. I am hoping to get some clarification and hear our panelists' thoughts on a "Green" Alternative Materials Physical Property Database. Would this database replicate the

structure and functions of the OSHA/EPA Occupational Chemical Database? Or, would it resemble the Pollution Prevention Resource Exchange, a clearinghouse that brings together information from a consortium of regional pollution prevention information centers funded by the EPA?

I am hoping that the highly qualified panel we have this morning will be able to shed some light on some of the gaps in electronic waste research and if the discussion draft appropriately addresses these shortcomings. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about this important issue. I yield back the balance of my time.