

Opening Statement
Ranking Member Ralph Hall (R-TX)
Hearing
Electronic Waste: Can the Nation Manage Refuse in the Digital Age?

April 30, 2008

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased we are having this hearing today. Electronic waste, or e-waste, is the unintended consequence of a high-tech industry that has grown substantially since its beginning in the second half of the 20th century. Although consumer electronics comprise less than 2% of municipal solid waste, it is one of the fastest growing waste streams in the United States. According to the EPA, less than 20% of e-waste is now recycled. Advancements in the consumer electronics field help create this growing amount of e-waste as electronics rapidly become obsolete.

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. This complexity creates a vast array of opinions on possible solutions to these problems. Today's panel is well suited to help us explore the options before us, from recycling of e-waste to better design that will minimize the problem in the future.

The House has passed H.R.2850, the Green Chemistry Research and Development Act of 2008, authored by my friend, Dr. Gingrey. I believe that this legislation was a step in the right direction, and like I said on the House floor at the time of its passage, advances in the research and development of green chemicals and products will reduce the creation of substances that are harmful to our environment. This certainly applies to the problems with e-waste.

I look forward to hearing from the panel today about this important issue. I yield back the balance of my time.