



Briefing Notice

Making Every Day Earth Day: How Better Recycling Can Minimize Waste and Boost the Economy

Tuesday, April 22, 2014

1:30 PM – 2:30 PM

406 Dirksen Senate Office Building

Please RSVP to expedite check-in: www.eesi.org/042214recycling#RSVP

The **Environmental and Energy Study Institute (EESI)** invites you to an Earth Day briefing about recycling at the local level, with an emphasis on four types of recycling: curbside, compost/organics, building deconstruction/reuse, and electronic waste. Members of the panel will discuss the environmental and economic benefits of recycling and ways in which to increase recycling in our homes, businesses, and communities. Speakers for this forum are:

- **Chaz Miller**, Director of Policy/Advocacy, National Waste & Recycling Association
- **Nelson Widell**, Co-Founder and Partner, Peninsula Compost Group, LLC
- **Bradley Guy**, Associate Director, Center for Building Stewardship; Assistant Professor, School of Architecture and Planning, The Catholic University of America
- **Walter Alcorn**, Vice-President of Environmental Affairs, Consumer Electronics Association

Recycling is an easy way for individuals to protect the Earth **and** help the economy. America's recycling industry accounted for more than one million jobs and over \$236 billion in annual revenue in 2001, when the last extensive study was carried out. In 2010, the U.S. recycling industry sold 44 million metric tons of recycled materials valued at almost \$30 billion to over 154 countries around the world. In addition to generating income, recycling saves money by reducing spending on landfills (which charge tipping fees and require significant amounts of land). Recycling also produces substantial energy savings of up to 87 percent for mixed plastics and 92 percent for aluminum cans. And, recycling has important environmental benefits: it limits the need to extract new resources and reduces greenhouse gas emissions. In 2012 alone, recycling prevented the equivalent of 168 million metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions, which is comparable to taking 33 million passenger vehicles off the road.

In 2012, Americans recycled and composted about 34.5 percent of the 251 million tons of trash they generated over the year. About 11.7 percent of U.S. waste was used as fuel in power plants, and the rest (53.8 percent) found its way to landfills. While these numbers have improved significantly over the past 20 years, there remains much room for improvement. Most developed nations have higher recovery rates than the United States, with Austria leading the way at 63 percent. Denmark, which recycles about 42 percent of its solid waste, burns the remainder for energy and has closed all its landfills. Americans recycle only about 7 percent of their plastic and 21 percent of their glass and aluminum waste. **Indeed, Americans throw away enough aluminum cans every month to completely rebuild the country's commercial air fleet.** The construction industry, with its outsized impact (50 percent of the solid waste stream in the United States is building waste) has the greatest potential for improvement.

This event is free and open to the public.

For more information, contact Ellen Vaughan at evaughan@eesi.org or (202) 662-1893.

