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The Honorable Roland Burris
United States Senate
523 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-1305

Dear Senator Burris:

I am writing on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Illinois Recycling Association, to urge you to support community recycling programs within the economic recovery package and specifically to support appropriations for the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants that were authorized by the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007. The environmental value of recycling is well established and well known. A draft US EPA analysis has shown that more than a third of the U.S. greenhouse gas emissions are attributable to the consumption of goods and materials (draft analysis by US EPA OSWER Center for Program Analysis, 2008). Currently, the U.S. recycles approximately 32 percent of its waste which saves an equivalent amount of greenhouse gases as removing 39 million cars from the road. Increasing the recycling rate to 35 percent would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by an additional 5.2 Million Metric Tons of Carbon Dioxide Equivalent which equates to the energy use of 458,000 homes for one year.

On the other hand, the economic value and job creation power of recycling is not as widely known. According to the EPA's "*U.S. Recycling Economic Information Study*," the recycling industry currently supports 3.2 million "green jobs." Municipal recycling creates \$236 billion in gross annual sales and \$37 billion in annual payrolls. For every job on the curb collecting recyclables, there are 26 more U.S. jobs in processing and manufacturing those recycled materials into new products. In 2007, recycling generated over \$22 billion in exports to over 130 countries.

In Illinois specifically, recycling has grown into a vibrant industry with over 1,300 collection and processing entities, employing approximately 23,000 individuals, generating an annual payroll of \$703 million, with annual receipts of \$2.1 billion. Recycling material versus landfilling creates 6-10 times as many jobs, and generates cost-effective materials that are cycled back into the economic mainstream as manufacturing feedstock. As states and municipalities face tightening budgets this year, many recycling programs are likely to be trimmed or eliminated altogether. Once that infrastructure is lost, it becomes far more costly to revive it in the future.

Therefore, we request that the Illinois Congressional delegation support appropriations for the purpose of creating or expanding a municipal recycling infrastructure. Increasing collection at the municipal level with modern equipment will create jobs and improve the quality and quantity of recovered raw materials. A \$50 million infusion of funds for community recycling programs would yield \$164.5 million in gross domestic product stimulus and 3,290 new jobs. It is important that the recovery package increase employment and boost the economy, while at the same time supporting our efforts to reduce fossil fuel consumption and green our economy. This relatively modest investment in community recycling infrastructure would trigger dramatic increases in employment, economic, and environmental benefits.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Michael Mitchell
Executive Director