



WHEREAS:

Walmart is the second largest U.S. retailer of consumer electronics, and such devices contain toxic materials such as lead, mercury, cadmium, brominated flame retardants, polyvinyl chloride, and are difficult to recycle.

Less than 20% of discarded electronics are collected for recycling, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. E-waste is the fastest growing and most hazardous component of the municipal waste stream, comprising more than 5%. The estimated collection rate for e-waste lags the U.S. recovery rate for all municipal waste of 34%.

Improper disposal of electronics can result in serious public health and environmental impacts. Analog TV sets and monitors with cathode ray tubes contain large amounts of lead, flat screen monitors contain mercury switches, and computer batteries contain cadmium, which can be harmful to human health if released to the environment.

The company has a zero waste to landfill commitment for operational waste. In Walmart's 2012 Global Responsibility Report, the top environmental accomplishment cited was keeping 80% of waste generated by U.S. operations out of landfills. However, there is no parallel commitment for keeping waste related to the company's substantial sales of electronics out of landfills. While it is important to recycle paper and plastic packaging materials from company operations, it is even more important to develop practices which assure that toxic materials in end-of-life electronics are diverted into responsible recycling streams. Electronics contain valuable metals such as gold, copper and silver that can be profitably reclaimed. Better recycling and reclamation of metals could take pressure off of conflict mineral zones where mining takes place under inhumane and forced labor conditions.

Our competitor Best Buy takes back a wide variety of electronics for free and Staples and Office Depot also offer take back. Best Buy's actions have kept 180 million pounds of electronics out of landfills in the last three years. After four years of dialogue with proponents, the company has not acknowledged even undertaking a substantive pilot program to test in-store take back of e-waste. Proponents believe our company should develop an in-store take back program using stores or nearby locations convenient for customers.

Electronic goods collected for recycling in the U.S. are often shipped by recyclers to developing countries where they endanger human health and the environment. Reports by Basel Action Network have revealed appalling conditions in China and parts of Africa where migrant workers break apart and process old electronic equipment under primitive conditions. Electronics collected by our company should be recycled or refurbished by responsible electronics recyclers who are independently verified to meet a leading certification standard such as the e-Stewards standard.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That Walmart's board of directors prepare a report, at reasonable cost and excluding confidential information, on policy options to provide mechanisms for in-store or nearby take back of electronics, promote reuse of returned working equipment, and prevent improper export of hazardous e-waste and untested or non-working equipment.