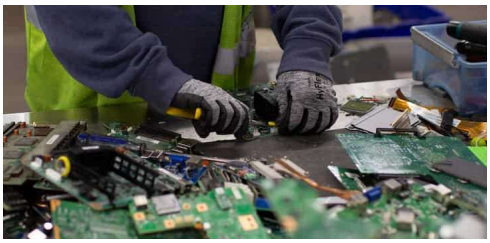
Issue: Electronic Waste Recycling

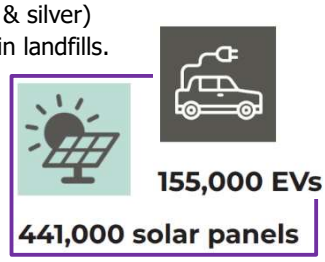
The Problem: Electronic waste (e-waste) is the fastest-growing waste stream in the world, increasing 3–5% annually. Yet most household electronics and batteries can be recycled.



- Minnesota generates **266 million pounds** of e-waste each year. Only **about 24%** is currently recycled.
- E-waste is only 1-2% of MN's waste stream, but accounts for more than **70% of landfill toxins**, creating risks to water, air, and public health.
- Lithium **batteries** in discarded electronics can **cause fires** in waste trucks, facilities, and landfills.
- County and municipal government **costs increase** when managing fire, contamination, and waste management challenges. This ultimately **increases taxpayer burdens**.
- Residents and businesses often must **pay fees** and travel long distances to recycle responsibly.

Economic Opportunity: Recent analysis estimates that if **100% of Minnesota's e-waste** were recovered:

- **68 recoverable minerals and metals** could be reclaimed (such as copper, lithium, gold, & silver)
- These materials could support domestic manufacturing supply chains, instead of being lost in landfills.
- Recovered silver could supply 441,000 solar panels, and copper 155,000 electric vehicles.
- **$2.8 billion** in economic value could be generated
- Nearly **1,740 direct jobs** could be created (plus additional indirect jobs)



Outdated Law & Recent Legislative Efforts:

- Minnesota's **Electronics Recycling Act (2007)** no longer reflects today's technology.
  - Written before smartphones, Bluetooth devices, and many lithium-battery products became common.
  - Collection has dropped from **40 million pounds at its peak** to about **20 million pounds** annually.
  - Limited collection sites and consumer fees remain major barriers.
- In 2023, a broad coalition of faith, environmental, and community organizations began work to update the law.
- In 2024, modernization legislation, including a small implementation fee on electronics sales, faced retailer opposition.
- In 2025, replacing fees with **manufacturer responsibility,** garnered **broad bipartisan legislator support**.
- **Lutheran Letter** Campaign **efforts were noticed** by the lead Senate author, as other legislators asked about the bill due to constituent letters.
- Numerous **industry lobbyists mobilized** shortly before the first Senate hearing, resulting in **withdrawal** of three key Senate co-authors, the primary House author **not advancing the bill for hearings**, and the **proposal stalling**.

2026 Efforts:

- Bills are being refined after a second round of stakeholder feedback. Two primary opposition groups are electronics manufacturers & battery industry representatives.
- A major retailer continues to oppose the electronics bill despite earlier negotiations and revisions.
- Some industry proposals could significantly weaken program effectiveness.
- Implementation discussions include whether industry self-policing or state enforcement should be used.
- Economic benefits remain strong if high collection rates are achieved.

Sources:

1. Maria Jensen: Repowered (Environment, Health, & Safety); Recycling Electronics for Climate Action (RECA); Areas of Study: Public Health (Research Methods); Environmental Toxicology & Public Health. Presentations: MEP Climate & Energy Cluster; Ely Tuesday Group
2. Lucy Mullany: Eureaka Recycling. Presentations/Discussions: MEP Climate & Energy Cluster
3. Jensen, Maria; Roopali Phadke; Keith Steva; Marlise Riffel. "The Economic Potential of E-Waste Recycling in Minnesota: A Pilot Study." Iron Range Partnership for Sustainability; Repowered; Macalester College. August 2023.
4. "Harnessing the Economic Potential of E-Waste Recycling: A New MN Study." Repowered.
5. Smieja, Jon. "The Enormous Opportunity of E-Waste Recycling." World Economic Forum. March 24, 2023.

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2026 Electronic Waste Proposals

Electronics Stewardship Program Establishment Bill – *SF 1690 (Senate)/ HF 1426 (House)*

- Same bill as last year, with possible amendments forthcoming (we were calling it the E-Waste Recycling Bill)
- **Updates the definition of e-waste** to all common household electronic devices, including electronics with circuit boards and electronics with battery or batteries built into item
- Provides **free, convenient statewide collection** for residents and businesses.
- Requires **manufacturers to fund recycling costs** proportional to their market share.
- Establishes **program administration** through a **board of manufacturers or a nonprofit** they select, under the broad oversight of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)
- **Exclusions:**
  - Lead-acid batteries (already have about 95% recovery)
  - Electric vehicles and infrastructure (separate systems)
  - Household appliances (like refrigerators, washers, dryers, air fryers, etc.)

Stand-Alone Battery Recycling Bill – *no bill numbers yet*

- Will address loose consumer batteries (removable batteries purchased separately)
- Based on model legislation from the **PRBA (Portable Rechargeable Battery Association)** which is the main U.S. battery industry association.
- Complementary to the Electronic Stewardship Bill

Talking Points & Sample Letter: E-Waste

Legislative "Ask":

Please support SF1690 (Senate)/HF1426 (House) ***and*** *the new complementary loose battery bill to*

- *Update the electronics definition*
- *Provide for* ***statewide free e-waste drop-off***
- *Require* ***manufacturers*** *to* ***pay the recycling collection costs*** *for e-waste (like other programs also managed by the MPCA)*

Possible Talking Points (choose a couple):

- I believe we must be good stewards of all that God has created.
- E-waste leaches toxins into our water and air.
- Anything with a lithium battery is a fire hazard in the trash, including air pods, singing cards, and e-cigarettes.
- The 2007 Minnesota Electronics Recycling Act is out of date as many new technologies are not covered or collected.
- Research shows that people are more likely to turn in old electronics and batteries if drop-off sites are free and accessible.
- Electronic waste contains high value metals like copper, platinum, silver, gold, & iron that can and should be recycled.
- Of 266 million pounds of e-waste produced in Minnesota annually, only about 24% gets collected and recycled.
- The minerals in Minnesota's e-waste would be worth 2.8 billion annually if captured and recycled.
- In moving from fossil fuels toward cleaner options to address the climate crisis, these minerals are increasing in demand.
- Recycling (or mining) of e-waste could add more than 1700 jobs

Example (please use your own words)

Date

Dear Rep. _____ (or Sen. _____),

We've been learning about e-waste at our church (2nd Lutheran, Lovelytown) & want to be able to recycle our old electronics. Putting them in the trash is a fire and health hazard, as toxins leach into our water and air.

There aren't any electronic drop-off sites in this part of the state, and even where there are, not all electronics are collected or recycled. Only about 24% of 266 million pounds of e-waste annually produced in MN are collected, recycled, and reused due to outdated laws.

Please support HF 1496 (or SF 1690), to create an Electronic Device Stewardship Program. Please also support the new Battery Collection & Recycling Bill. It's time to update & expand the definition of e-waste, provide accessible and free drop-off or collection, and have manufacturers pay the cost of collection.

The minerals and metals in e-waste are increasingly in demand as the world works to move away from fossil fuels. Not only that, it could be an economic boon for Minnesota, worth $2.8 billion annually and creating more than 1700 jobs statewide.

Thank you!
Name
Address

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