



An Important Message from the NRC President:

National Recycling Coalition Applauds US Senate for Passage of Resolution 251 - A 'Resolution in Support of Recycling' - And Focuses on 'What's Next?'



Last week, "Senators Tom Carper (D-Del.) and Olympia Snowe (R-Maine), Co-Chairs of the Senate Recycling Caucus, celebrated the unanimous Senate approval of a **resolution** that expresses support for improvement in the collection, processing and use of recyclable materials throughout the United States" (Senate Press Release, 11/17/11). More important is the fact that the resolution reinforces the importance of recycling to the US economy and the role it plays in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

The NRC joins the Senators in the celebration. While this resolution is non-binding, we see it as just another in a growing list of very important indicators pointing out the rising - some might say, resurgent role - recycling has as a transformative US industry sector. We do not equivocate when we say that we view recycling as absolutely essential in helping to build our new economy. This resolution supports that premise. See the [Senate press release](#) for more information.

Ponder this bright light - a resolution from the dark political abyss that has been Washington - while considering a number of other recent developments. Dwell, for a moment, on the momentum growing behind recycling's essential role as a job creator as depicted throughout 2011 in reports from the Brookings Institute, Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries, and Tellus Institute/Sound Resource Management. Think about the impacts of the recently announced plan by the Chinese government of their intent to launch an "ambitious goal of recycling 70 percent of the nation's waste streams by 2015, in hopes of transforming the world's second largest economy into one that is sustainable" (*Resource Recycling*, 11/11/11). The effects of this Chinese initiative on global recycling infrastructure could provide a great opportunity for reinvestment into recycling infrastructure here. Note, this last week US Dept. of Energy Secretary Chu sounded an alarm about the impacts China's substantial investments into solar and other renewables might have on our country. His word of caution was that we risk falling far behind unless we immediately invest in those technologies domestically. The same can be said for recycling, making the Senate Resolution even more pertinent.

All of these are potential "game-changers." In fact, many well-versed individuals in our industry would say the game-change has been in process for some time now. Nevertheless, as a result of all this, there still is a ball for us to grab, and it is right there in front of us.

The NRC is committed to capitalizing on these changes and positive developments-collaborating to leverage them to enhance our industry, and in the end, to achieving exponentially greater recycling and diversion rates in this country.

We want to recognize the Recycling Roundtable - a group comprised of the Aluminum Association, American Forest and Paper Association, Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries, National Solid

Wastes Management Association, Paper Recycling Coalition, Solid Waste Association of North America, and Steel Recycling Institute - for its foresight earlier this year recognizing the need for this resolution, and leading with its development. We also thank Senator Carper's office for working with the NRC on edits to the resolution. Last, and more importantly, we want to acknowledge the immediate and immense response to the NRC's call for organizations to support the resolution. In short order, we were able to secure 24 signatories of support from state and regional recycling organizations and 10 outside environmental groups. For me, this exemplifies how powerful and influential we can be when we come together.

The NRC plans to build on the positive message of this resolution, and as such, we are starting to identify the specific action-steps the broader recycling industry needs play to help accelerate green job creation, all building toward development of a sustainable economy. Two immediate steps include:

- I created a special **Recycling Jobs Task Force** and have asked NRC's immediate Past President, Melinda Uerling to chair the group. Its charge will be to continue to foster national dialogue on this issue with ISRI, Brookings, The Tellus Institute and others, but more importantly, to help develop more succinct strategies to accelerate recycling's role in this area, working with municipal government, business and labor groups, and others.
- We will roll-out the "Blue Ribbon" **Recycling Advisory Council** in early 2012 (see prior NRC releases about this initiative). This group will help promote integrative strategies to further build national recycling infrastructure.

If you are interested in either one of these initiatives, please let me know at MarkL@NRCrecycles.org

My very best to you all during this upcoming holiday season,

Mark Lichtenstein
NRC President