



**TEXAS CAMPAIGN  
FOR THE ENVIRONMENT**

# Take Back My TV Campaign Gets Results!

Several major television manufacturers agree to offer free, nationwide recycling programs before the DTV switch



## TCE Turns Up the Heat on TV Makers

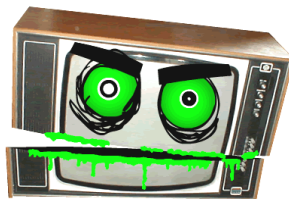
In the past year and a half, TCE and the national Electronics TakeBack Coalition (ETBC) have made incredible progress. The imaginative, persistent campaign has succeeded in convincing eight TV makers to begin offering recycling programs for their obsolete products, all before the upcoming DTV switch. This work has convinced even the strongest opponents of producer takeback recycling to agree that they should take responsibility for the full life-cycle of their electronics. As always, it is your support and grassroots pressure that drives these victories.

In August 2007, Sony became the first major manufacturer to begin free, nationwide TV recycling. TCE and ETBC applauded Sony and launched the “Take Back My TV” campaign to urge other producers to follow suit. This made it very difficult for other TV makers to argue that recycling would be too costly. The message to manufacturers was simple: if Sony can recycle, why can’t you?

## Zombie TVs Haunt Irresponsible Manufacturers

Marking the one-year countdown to the planned DTV switch gave TCE a perfect opportunity to call attention to the millions of obsolete TVs that would end up in our landfills if their producers refused to recycle responsibly. Together with national ETBC allies, TCE organized nationwide demonstrations with activists dressed as “Undead Zombie TVs” to highlight the problem creatively. Zombie TV sightings continued throughout the year as pressure mounted on recycling laggards.

With three months to go until the anticipated DTV switch, Zombie TVs unveiled the “TV Recycling Report Card” to grade the progress of the manufacturers. More than half failed!



## Starting at the Top

Samsung is #1 in sales of new TVs and the only major producer with a manufacturing presence in Texas. TCE supporters sent thousands of letters and postcards and organized actions at the company’s Austin and Richardson locations. The pressure worked: in September 2008, they agreed to start recycling and support producer takeback. In November, Wal-Mart partnered with Samsung to take back their iLo and Durabrand TVs as well.

For over a decade, broken Zenith TV tubes were at the center of a toxic waste controversy at Texas Disposal Systems, a south Travis County landfill. LG now owns the Zenith brand and had voiced support for producer takeback policies – but refused to take responsibility for its own e-waste. After receiving a flood of correspondence from TCE and ETBC supporters, LG/Zenith was finally convinced to offer free, nationwide recycling as well.

## Even the Strongest Opponents Swayed

For years, Panasonic, Sharp and Toshiba opposed producer takeback recycling policies and offered recycling only in the states which required it by law. TCE supporters began sending letters. ETBC allies held a protest at Panasonic’s New Jersey headquarters (pictured above) and ran an ad in Times Square – on a massive Panasonic screen! Zombie TV activists from TCE invaded the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, where the companies relented and announced they would begin recycling nationwide.

In January 2009, Best Buy announced e-waste recycling at all its U.S. locations – one of the most convenient recycling options yet.

These victories demonstrate the effectiveness of grassroots campaigning. There is still much work to do, but TCE is confident that with your support we can keep making progress. ☀



Robin Schneider

Do you ever feel like your job never ends?

The Texas State Legislature is back in session, and we've got our work cut out for us.

In 2007, TCE helped pass one of the first electronic waste recycling laws in the country. We went right to work to push for strong rules to implement the computer producer takeback law. We

worked with local governments, state lawmakers and producers such as Dell to let the state environmental agency know that Texans want producer takeback recycling to do the job.

The state environmental agency set up a new website, [www.TexasRecyclesComputers.org](http://www.TexasRecyclesComputers.org), with links to the producer takeback recycling programs. Public education is also the responsibility of the state agency, but without funding they haven't been able to do much. So, when the law took effect on September 1, 2008, TCE held press conferences in three cities and a statewide press teleconference to spread the word.

Despite the law's requirement that producer recycling programs be free and convenient, TCE's review process discovered numerous violations and we filed 50 complaints. TCE also filed complaints when we found retailers selling computers and monitors from manufacturers who were not listed on the state website. Luckily, so far the state environmental agency has responded to our complaints and worked with producers and retailers to ensure compliance.

At the Capitol, several state lawmakers are following through on their promise during the last session to address televisions. They have introduced legislation that would require producers to recycle their TVs, our top priority for the current legislative session.

In the meantime, TCE and our national coalition partners have been putting serious pressure on TV makers to set up national takeback programs to meet the critical need for recycling. Consumers are switching to flat screens and digital ready TVs in droves; the EPA estimates that Americans have 99 million unused TVs stored in their homes.

TCE launched letter-writing drives and creative pressure campaigns. In costume as "Zombie TVs," we garnered local, state, national and even international attention to the problem of toxic TVs polluting our planet. The results are clear. In August 2007, no TV makers offered national takeback programs. As of February 17, 2009 – the day the TV signal was to switch to digital – there were eight major companies offering recycling. These voluntary programs are a good start, but do not substitute for state legislation on TV recycling.

In addition to our focus on e-waste recycling, TCE is there to help when neighborhoods are confronting problem landfills. We provide organizing expertise and are the watchdogs on state policy-makers. Last year, TCE succeeded in stopping the state environmental agency from letting landfills use toxic waste to cover the household trash. This "daily cover" is supposed to protect neighbors from odors, scavenging animals and windblown waste – not create new hazards.

Last year TCE generated more than 60,000 letters, which were crucial to achieving these victories. Our organizers are mobilizing Texans five nights a week in D/FW, Central Texas and Houston. TCE is the only environmental group with full-time door-to-door organizers outside of the Central Texas area.

We owe much of our success to our dedicated members. We advocate for nearly 30,000 members across Texas. For the past 17 years we have been working successfully to protect natural resources and public health. We're proud to say that we are primarily funded by our members at the grassroots level. This allows us to remain a strong and independent organization. ☀

LANDFILLS & RECYCLING

Aiming for Zero Waste

Austin has joined Toyota, Xerox, and Wal-Mart in setting a goal of "Zero Waste, or Darn Close." Why? Zero Waste means more efficient use of resources, less need for landfilling, and cutting emissions of methane – a potent climate change gas. In addition, reuse and recycling create jobs – up to 250 times more jobs per ton compared to landfilling.

How will Austin reach its Zero Waste goal? First, Austin's plan calls for increasing composting of organic waste and expanding the curbside pick-up of yard waste to include food scraps. Representing roughly half of our waste, organic materials create methane gas

when put into landfills. In a 20-year time frame, methane is more than 70 times more powerful than carbon dioxide in creating heat-trapping gases. Landfills are the largest source of human-made methane emissions (see [www.StopTrashingTheClimate.org](http://www.StopTrashingTheClimate.org) for more). Instead, compost – and simply leaving grass clippings on lawns – replenishes soils without creating methane.

For non-organic discards, producer takeback recycling is a key Zero Waste strategy. Product waste is growing fast, and becoming more toxic – consider that there are 426,000 cell phones discarded every day on Planet Earth! The Austin plan envisions neighborhood reuse and return centers where various product waste, such as e-waste or pharmaceuticals, can be sorted.

Putting the policies in place to achieve Zero Waste will require the energy and engagement of a wide cross-section of the community. In January 2009, TCE helped pull together a diverse coalition to form the Central Texas Zero Waste Alliance. Its members were on hand when the Austin City Council voted unanimously to adopt Texas' first Zero Waste Plan.



TCE and the Alliance will work at the city, regional and state level to see that a more sustainable Zero Waste economy is realized. Think about it – if you're not for Zero Waste, how much waste are you for? ☀

## E-waste, Trash & Recycling Bills on the Agenda

The 81st Texas State Legislative Session kicked off in January and TCE has a number of waste and recycling initiatives in the pipeline. Because the Legislature only convenes January through May every other year, each session is a mad dash to make progress on the environmental issues that affect lives and communities across Texas. TCE's 2009 state legislative priorities are a set of pragmatic goals intended to create programs that work for Texans, while sustaining our natural resources – and our economy – for generations to come.

### TVs Need Recycling, Too

The first priority is to expand the 2007 Electronics TakeBack Law to include TVs in light of the June 12th digital switch. Without this legislation, millions of obsolete TVs could make their way to Texas landfills. The good news is that thanks to strong public pressure several bills are up for consideration. Representative Dennis Bonnen and Senator Kirk Watson – sponsors of the 2007 law – have again taken the lead by filing HB 1189 and SB 761 to add televisions to the existing law. Similar yet more limited provisions have been filed in HB 821 (Rep. Leibowitz). The most extensive bill is HB 1355 (Rep. Guillen). This bill adds keyboards, mice, cell phones, pagers, PDAs and digital cameras and covers more consumers such as schools, small businesses and small non-profits.



### Strengthening Producer TakeBack Programs

TCE is also working to pass legislation that would create stronger incentives for responsible recycling. Texas needs to join the growing number of states that ban hazardous e-waste from landfills altogether. Much like the disposal ban on car batteries and oil filters, prohibiting the landfilling or incineration of e-waste will go a long way to keep the toxic materials from polluting our air and water. TCE expects Representative Jessica Farrar to file this legislation.

The 2007 takeback law promised responsible e-waste recycling. Dumping e-waste in developing nations overseas is neither “responsible” nor “recycling,” yet that is precisely the fate of most electronics collected by U.S. e-cyclers. Unfortunately, most legal experts agree that national legislation is needed to fully address this problem. That’s why Representatives Rafael Anchia and Dwayne Bohac have filed a bill to create more transparency in Texas e-waste recycling (HB 284). Their bill requires recyclers to submit documentation of any export of hazardous e-waste to developing nations. While it would not ban export, the added public scrutiny would be a strong deterrent.

### Landfill & Recycling Bills

TCE is also pushing for a number of other waste and recycling provisions this session. The priorities include: expanding producer takeback recycling to include mercury-containing products such as fluorescent lighting and thermostats; reducing the number of disposable plastic bags that end up in landfills (SB 338, HB 1867 and HB 1361); restoring the right to an automatic public meeting when a hazardous waste facility or landfill is proposed (HB 433); providing public notice before trash permits are transferred (HB 234); and collecting recyclables in State Capitol buildings (HB 235).

Across the board, these legislative priorities are designed to reduce waste and decrease environmental toxins. At the same time, this will help build a sustainable economy, one in which resources are valued rather than buried in the ground and green jobs are created in a thriving recovery-reuse-recycling sector. But if we want our lawmakers to agree, we need you to take action. ☀

**Your voice is crucial: write your State Legislators today!**

State Representative  
P.O. Box 2910  
Austin, TX 78768

State Senator  
P.O. Box 12068  
Austin, TX 78711

## FEDERAL E-WASTE LEGISLATION

### Stopping Toxic E-waste Export

TCE and its allies at the Electronics TakeBack Coalition are increasing the pressure on U.S. Congressmembers to take steps to end the export of toxic electronic waste to developing nations. As further revelations emerge surrounding this dangerous practice, the need for federal legislation has become increasingly clear.

National reports such as a shocking *60 Minutes* exposé and a *TIME* magazine article have detailed the fate of American e-waste shipped overseas. Additionally, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) – the independent investigative arm of Congress – released a report showing rampant deception by companies in the

American e-cycling sector and the failure of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to enforce existing rules barring the export of broken CRT monitors. Along with these national reports, several features on e-waste by local reporters and our continued grassroots public education efforts are beginning to raise awareness among citizens and spur our lawmakers into action.



Photo: National Geographic

Last year TCE worked with Houston-area U.S. House member Gene Green to introduce H.Res. 1395 and put several Congress members on record opposing the export of discarded, non-working electronics to developing nations. With the country’s second-largest Congressional delegation, Texas can play a major role in the next steps – which makes your support crucial during the 111th Congress.

This is the first national legislative campaign in which TCE will take a leading role. With your help, TCE and its national allies will keep the pressure on the Texas Congressional delegation and the Obama administration to make 2009 the year America ends the dumping of its hazardous e-waste on countries across the globe. ☀

## TCE Annual Meeting: March 29th

Join the TCE Staff and Board on March 29th, 1-4pm, for a review of the successes of 2008. We'll meet at Texas Disposal Systems in Southeast Travis County for a potluck lunch and tour of its landfill, composting facilities and exotic game ranch. See [www.texasenvironment.org](http://www.texasenvironment.org) for directions.

## Grassroots Advocacy Day: March 30th

On March 30th TCE will head to the Capitol in Austin to visit our state legislators. We invite you to join us for this key opportunity to influence our elected officials! Contact us right away to schedule an appointment with your hometown lawmakers.

611 S. Congress Ste. 200, Austin TX 78704, 512-326-5655  
 3303 Lee Parkway Ste. 402, Dallas TX 75219, 214-599-7840  
 3100 Richmond Ste. 300, Houston TX 77098, 713-337-4192

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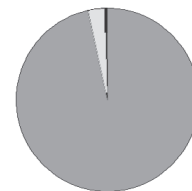


611 S. Congress Ave. Suite 200  
 Austin, TX 78704

Texas Campaign for the Environment is dedicated to stretching its dollars and focusing on our mission of protecting public health and the environment in Texas. Here's an overview of our financial statement. (Source: TCE IRS Form 990 2008)

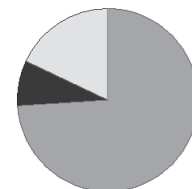
Where TCE's 2008 contributions came from:  
 Income Total \$1,118,360

- 96.7% Grassroots contributions
- 3% Restricted projects funding
- .3% Reimbursed expenses, misc.



How those contributions are spent:  
 Expense Total \$1,068,655

- 74% Educating & Organizing Texans on Public Health & Environmental Issues
- 18% Fundraising Expenses
- 8% Managing Organization



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## Houston Office: Quite An Exciting Start

When TCE started its new Houston office, our timing wasn't the greatest. Less than one week after our office opened on September 8th, a tornado spawned during Hurricane Ike ripped a swath off the roof of our office building. Luckily, the TCE offices were on the second floor of the five-story building and were spared the extensive water damage other offices suffered. And thankfully TCE was not working in the adjacent two-story building that had its entire east-facing wall "relocated." TCE was informed it could move back into the office after a few weeks of construction. If only this had been even *remotely* true.

For the next five months, the temporary office was our staff director's living room. TCE was literally "in the house!" In spite of the dislocation, TCE's initial organizing efforts are progressing well. Supporters in every neighborhood visited by TCE have embraced the ideas of the campaign and contributed the resources to help the organization thrive in trying circumstances. The staff is very happy to be back in the office on Richmond Avenue, although the comfy couches and full kitchen are missed.

The storm's consequences may have surprised us, but our success so far has not. Houstonians know we have work to do! TCE is well aware of the full slate of environmental health issues affecting

residents in Texas' biggest city. From Katy to The Woodlands, our canvassers are out every day generating community-based strength in numbers.

TCE's clout with our elected officials is growing. With the addition of the Houston office, TCE is now able to organize in the majority of Texas' state and federal legislative districts – which gives us an even greater ability to hold our lawmakers accountable.

Every so often, one of our staff encounters a TCE supporter who remembers our work when we had a Houston office in the early 90s. Several have asked, "Where have you been?" We tell them TCE returned to Houston as soon as it could. ☀