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## **NRC Supports Federal Expansion of America's Recycling Infrastructure**

by Bob Gedert, President, National Recycling Coalition and the NRC Board of Directors – on behalf of the NRC members

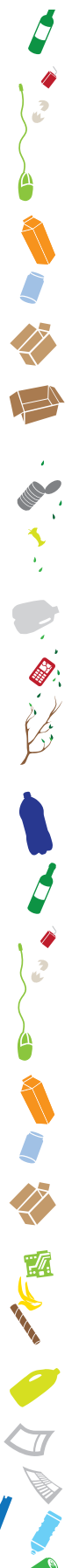
In the President's proposed fiscal 2018 budget, the US Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) annual budget allocation is proposed to be cut by one third. This cut would result in the elimination of over 50 programs and 3,200 jobs. Two of the programs proposed to be eliminated include the Sustainable Materials Management program and the Waste Reduction Model. Eliminating these programs will likely reduce critical support of the American recycling industry and negatively impact the American economy.

According to a recent statement from Ron Gonen of Closed Loop Partners, "These EPA programs analyze the way we consume, use and reuse materials and solid waste, providing tools and guidelines for industry, private companies and elected officials. The materials management and waste reduction programs guide investments into recycling facilities that sort and process material, and manufacturing infrastructure that utilizes these materials to make new products here at home – creating jobs in the process."

It is disappointing to see proposed federal disinvestment in the recycling industry considering the jobs and opportunities recycling bring to our country, and the fact that the recycling industry is as large as the automobile industry. Infrastructure expansion into the recycling industry will bring new living wage jobs along with opportunities for the advent of new technologies in renewable energy and help businesses save money by being more efficient and reducing wasting.

One potential silver lining of the President's budget proposal is new funding to support infrastructure redevelopment. Recently, the President toured the country announcing new transportation infrastructure funding for the airline industry, for the inland waterway transportation network, for dams and levee reconstruction, and for the federal highway system. The announcements throughout the "Infrastructure Week" outlined a series of proactive funding approaches aimed at revitalizing America's decaying infrastructure.

The National Recycling Coalition (NRC) strongly supports efforts to invest and improve our country's aging infrastructure. The recycling industry particularly needs a 21st-century transportation system to efficiently transport raw materials



and feedstocks to manufacturers throughout the nation and the globe, including increased capacity and investment in all modes of transportation, covering rail, surface, and waterways. All infrastructure projects could generate far more jobs from the reuse and recycling of buildings and roads and the use of recycled and recyclable materials wherever economically and technologically possible (e.g., use of rubberized asphalt in road construction and use of rebar from ferrous scrap).

NRC also believes that investing in American recycling infrastructure would provide an excellent return on investment and leveraging of federal funds. Support of American recycling infrastructure would enable America to bring home recycling jobs from overseas, and dramatically expand the three-quarters of a million jobs and tens of billions of dollars already occurring in economic activity. Instead of shipping nearly half of all recovered recyclables to overseas markets, a refreshed recycling infrastructure will support new American end markets, manufacturers, and businesses creating closed loop material streams and lower transportation costs.

Today's rapidly evolving waste stream requires an upgraded recycling infrastructure from collection to processing to manufacturing. Recycling industry experts note that the "evolving ton" reflects the light-weighting of plastic containers (PET), a significant reduction in newsprint (ONP) in the consumer stream, and a significant uptick in old corrugated containers (OCC) known as the "Amazon Effect" due to internet sales to home delivery. Single-stream material recovery facilities (MRFs) that service residential communities were not designed for these consumer shifts and are in need of redesign and expanded capacity. End-users and remanufacturers also need to reflect these consumer shifts. The "evolving ton" creates pressure points throughout the value chain from consumer product redesign and sales all the way through the recycling system, requiring a full upscaling of the American recycling infrastructure.

The National Recycling Coalition urges citizens to contact your local Congressional Representative as the Federal Budget is debated and revised this summer, asking for support of the USEPA budget, as well as new infrastructure support for the American recycling system.

Investing in America's recycling infrastructure is an investment in American jobs, in the American economy, and in reducing costs for businesses that will provide an excellent return for the investment of federal funds.

The National Recycling Coalition is a non-profit organization that is focused on the promotion and enhancement of recycling in the United States. We are 23-affiliated recycling organizations strong, and have a network of more than 6,000 members that extends across waste reduction, reuse, recycling, and composting. The organization works to maintain a prosperous and productive recycling system that is committed to the conservation of natural resources, as well as accelerate sustainable approaches to the management of discarded materials.

