

Michigan Recycling Partnership



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 19, 2006

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Comprehensive Recycling Plan Would Create Jobs, Improve Michigan's Environment

LANSING, Mich. — The Michigan Recycling Partnership announced today the findings of an economic report that shows improved recycling in Michigan would help create thousands of jobs.

According to a 2006 study conducted by Public Sector Consultants, bringing Michigan's recycling rate up to that of its Great Lakes neighbor states would produce between 6,810 and 12,986 jobs in the recycling and re-use industry.

"We have known for years that Michigan's lack of a comprehensive statewide approach to recycling has put us well behind our Great Lakes neighbors and the rest of the nation," said Mary Dechow, government relations director for Spartan Stores and chair of the Michigan Recycling Partnership. "This study clearly shows that a statewide approach to recycling that captures the majority of our solid waste will reap both economic and environmental benefits."

Michigan's recycling rate of 20 percent is significantly lower than the other Great Lakes states' average of 30 percent, and is falling while other states are gaining. Michigan's recycling rate decreased by 20 percent from 1994 to 2004, while every other state in the region had at least a marginal increase in recycling. The economic study revealed recycling rates in other Great Lakes States as high as 48.5 percent. Such success was directly attributable to funding to help establish and grow recycling collection and processing systems, and strong statewide goals for waste diversion.

MRP is advocating a common sense, cost-effective solution to address Michigan's woeful record on recycling and realize the significant economic gains of a comprehensive statewide program. The proposal — known as "Recycling Makes Cents" — would add a one-cent recycling fee to retail transactions of \$2 or more, thereby generating significant revenue to provide comprehensive curbside and drop off recycling options to more Michigan residents. The proposal would help raise an estimated \$40 million per year to expand recycling programs statewide, build a better recycling collection and processing infrastructure, and spur recycling-related job growth in Michigan.

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The “Recycling Makes Cents” plan has been introduced legislatively under House Bill 5163, sponsored by Representative Goeff Hansen (R-Hart). Under that legislative proposal, 50 percent of funds collected would be distributed in matching funds to assist current recycling programs; 40 percent would provide seed money for new recycling and waste diversion programs, including business efforts; and 10 percent would be used toward litter reduction and education.

“This plan provides funding to improve access to recycling for all Michigan residents, and at the same time generates enough revenue to establish and sustain a statewide program that will allow for a significant recycling industry to take root, grow and create jobs,” Dechow said. “The Recycling Makes Cents plan will reduce our dependency on landfills and encourage better use of our natural resources, at a cost of just pennies a day for residents.”

Michigan’s recycling program is funded at a fraction of the level of Great Lakes neighbor states’ programs and ranks 41st out of the 48 states that reported their allocations for recycling. According to a separate February 2006 public opinion survey conducted by Marketing Resource Group, only 27 percent of Michigan residents report having access to curbside and drop off recycling, the lowest percentage of all the states in the region. Experts estimate that if current trends continue, Michigan landfills will be filled to capacity within 20 years.

“If Michigan were to raise its recycling rate from its current rate of 20 percent to the 30 percent average of the other Great Lakes states, it would create a minimum of 7,000 jobs, and as many as 13,000,” said Bill Rustem, president and CEO of Public Sector Consultants. “To put this job creation figure in context, over the last two years only three of Michigan’s 12 major business sectors — educational and health services, leisure and hospitality, and accommodation and food services — created more than 7,000 jobs.”

The economic study also estimates that an improved recycling system would generate \$155 to \$300 million of new income, and \$12 million to \$22 million in new state revenue. Rustem says the estimates are conservative because they do not take into account the substitution of recycled materials for other raw materials, which would generate additional manufacturing activity.

The February 2006 MRG poll found that Michigan residents are highly supportive of a statewide comprehensive recycling program. More than three-quarters of those polled said they support creating a comprehensive recycling program in Michigan. Sixty percent favored public funding for a statewide recycling program, and 62 percent said they would support the Recycling Makes Cents plan.

The Michigan Recycling Partnership represents more than 25,000 businesses and 400,000 employees who share a concern over the lack of a comprehensive solid waste policy in Michigan. MRP continues to urge Michigan to do more to support and encourage recycling opportunities, which preserve natural resources and limit landfill dependency.

For more information, please visit www.michiganrecyclingpartnership.com. To view the full economic report, please visit <http://www.pscinc.com>.