



Electronics recycling group calls for end to exports

By Henry Leineweber

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A relatively new organization calling itself the Coalition for American Electronics Recycling is urging Congress to pass the Responsible Electronics Recycling Act – and is specifically calling for restrictions on the export of electronic scrap to developing countries.

The CAER includes a growing roster of 29 U.S. electronics recycling firms, which operate 74 recycling facilities in 34 states, and includes a range of firms including refurbishers, scrap processors and refiners. The organization is so far focused on the pending legislation in Congress and has not discussed working together on other issues yet.

The organization's six-member steering committee, which recently returned from a week of meetings with Congressional members, is made up of Bob Houghton, president of Redemtech; Jim Taggart, CEO of ECS Refining; Neil Peters-Michaud, CEO of Cascade Asset Management; Wendy Neu, executive VP of Hugo Neu Corporation, a major investor in WeRecycle!; John Shegerian, CEO of Electronic Recyclers International; and David Zimet, CEO of Hesstech.

The group is arguing that current U.S. policy on the export of electronics harms the domestic recycling industry by creating seven recycling jobs overseas for every one job created domestically. Additionally, the group says current policy punishes responsible e-scrap processors by forcing them to compete against irresponsible export companies who can operate at a lower cost.

"This isn't a certification issue, it's about doing the right thing," says Shegerian in a phone conversation with *E-Scrap News*. "It's about making sure we get a handle on this issue from an environmental standpoint, a jobs standpoint and a national security standpoint."

The stance of the organization is in sharp contrast to the position adopted by the Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries Inc., which famously [declared](#) e-scrap exports a non-issue at the recent E-Scrap Conference in Orlando, Florida. The trade organization has previously said that 70 percent of electronic waste is processed domestically and that the material exported is "commodity grade scrap."

"ISRI does not support banning the U.S. export of legal, safe e-scrap," says ISRI marketing and communications VP Melissa Merz. "Our member companies understand, and [the only statistically accurate survey](#) of the industry to date shows, that electronics recycling is a growing industry already creating jobs here in America and safe exports are a large part of that. Any misguided attempts to over-regulate will only set the industry back, deal a blow to the economy and put Americans out of work."

"I'm an ISRI member, and a lot of the companies in our group are ISRI members," counters Shegerian, "so the opinions of our group is the ISRI opinion. We're confident we can work together on this."

Both ERI and Hugo Neu are ISRI members according to ISRI's most recent membership directory. All companies on the steering committee are certified to the Basel Action Network's e-Stewards standard, except Hesstech, whose certification is pending. Additionally, ERI's facilities are certified to the R2 standard.

CAER says it will continue to urge the passage of tighter controls on electronic scrap exports. The [Responsible Electronics Recycling Act](#), also known as companion bills HR 2284 and S 1270, is supported by the CAER membership, as well as by Hewlett Packard, Dell, Apple, Samsung, Best Buy and several prominent environmental organizations.

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