

I am very pleased to welcome you all to Minnesota. Thank you to the Office of Environmental Assistance for leading Minnesota's product stewardship initiatives, and to OEA Director SherryENZler for inviting me here this morning.

Product stewardship is an innovative approach that brings government and industry together to determine joint solutions to meeting environmental challenges.

This group of committed manufacturers, states and environmental organizations has been meeting for a year now, and I understand that you are close to reaching an agreement to establish a nationwide recycling program for old computers and televisions.

I am glad to see so many electronics companies involved. We appreciate your leadership. By helping to establish a national recycling program, you demonstrate that your companies are on the cutting edge when it comes to environmental stewardship as well as electronics.

I am also glad to see so many states and local governments here today. We all face growing piles of waste electronics without viable options for managing them. The most effective and efficient management program will be one that benefits all of our communities, and doesn't rely on government funding for results.

I am also pleased to see retailers at this meeting. In Minnesota, we have worked with Best Buy, Target and Circuit City to figure out how to make it easy for people to bring their old electronics to retail collection sites. It makes a lot of sense to me to make recycling the old one as easy as buying the new one.

I appreciate the environmental community's focus on making the products we buy and use less toxic. It is important to handle our resources and wastes responsibly, not just in a few states, or a few countries, but across the world.

This spring, Minnesota renewed its contract with a local recycler -- Asset Recovery Corporation -- to manage all of government's own old computers and electronics within North America, rather than exporting hazardous components overseas.

This product stewardship initiative involves all the right partners. When you find ways to design products differently, to get products and materials back for reuse, and to develop new markets, you don't just solve a problem--you create opportunities.

I look forward to hearing what comes out of your meetings today and in September. And I look forward to getting my old TV and computer out of my own basement and back into your hands for recycling.

Thank you.