

**Issue:** The current recycling program in the U.S. is not sufficient to truly ease the burden on our economy, land usage, or infrastructure. Without any reforming efforts, we will continue to add approximately 146 million tons of waste per year (as of 2018 statistics from the EPA) to landfills. However, there is a way to turn this waste into energy and supplement utility cost across all waste collection and processing entities, aimed to effectively reduce subsidies.

**Call To Action:** The proposal points below should be carefully considered in revising our recycling program. Without crucial revision efforts we will also continue to miss opportunities to achieve self-sustainability.

**Recycling Program Revision:** Legislation needs to be established to unify the recycling program across the United States. Germany has had a national law in place for recycling since 1972 and is now leading the world in best recycling practices. Our proposal requires that the collection, transport, and reuse of as much material as practical to be imposed. In addition, the legislation shall require recycling and waste collection facilities to utilize sustainable green energy wherever practical such as using waste-to-energy (WTE) plants. By building new plants, and/or increasing the current production rates of WTE plants, we can reduce our landfill footprint and prevent further waste of land space. WTE plants produce about 550 KWh per ton, at the current national average of 10.52 cents per KWh, that means these plants can recover \$57.86 per ton. That also leads to the potential of producing power outside of the plant as well, further reducing the need for fossil fueled plants. Additionally, as we start removing the waste from the landfill, there are endless possibilities to reutilize that land for other avenues of revenue.

**Improve Practical Recycling Education:** Recycling education must start from an early age and continue into early adulthood to be effective. We need to build the premise of changing our mindset and culture on recycling efforts. What is needed is legislation designed to modify the current school curriculum to incorporate recycling practices, energy conservation efforts, and climate-conscience actions. There are plenty of existing educational resources available; the problem is that nobody is held accountable for educating others on these topics. This proposal is the first step in that process.

**Accountability Requirements:** This legislation will also need to be proposed to hold businesses accountable for failing to follow recycling practices. Businesses will be held accountable for ensuring that their raw materials are from recycled stock as much as practicable. If they fail to adhere to this, then they will be subject to a fine equivalent to four times the national average of MSW (Municipal Solid Waste) disposal. Additionally, if businesses generate recycled material and deliver it to the collection center, they will be rewarded with a tax break that is worth two to three times the MSW disposal.

Implementing these policies is environmentally sustainable and deficit-reducing. It is now up to us to right the wrongs of previous generations. We can do this together!