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November 9, 2010

The Honorable Lloyd Doggett
201 Cannon House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Doggett:

**SUPPORT – H.R. 5856 – THE WASTE-TO-ENERGY TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 2010
(INTRODUCED JULY 26, 2010)**

The Los Angeles County Solid Waste Management Committee/Integrated Waste Management Task Force (Task Force) **supports** H.R. 5856, the “Waste-to-Energy Technology Act of 2010.” This bill amends the Internal Revenue Code to provide up to \$1 Billion in tax credits for a “qualified waste-to-energy property,” as defined. H.R. 5856 defines “qualified waste-to-energy property” as a property comprising a system which uses municipal solid waste or municipal sewage sludge as the feedstock for producing solid, liquid, or gas fuel, as certified.

Pursuant to Chapter 3.67 of the Los Angeles County Code and the California Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989, the Task Force is responsible for coordinating the development of all major solid waste planning documents prepared for the County of Los Angeles and the 88 cities in Los Angeles County with a combined population in excess of ten million. Consistent with these responsibilities and to ensure a coordinated, cost-effective, and environmentally sound solid waste management system in Los Angeles County, the Task Force also addresses issues impacting the system on a countywide basis. The Task Force membership includes representatives of the League of California Cities-Los Angeles County Division, County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors, City of Los Angeles, waste management industry, environmental groups, the public, and a number of other governmental agencies.

The bill would define “qualified waste-to-energy property” to mean a property comprising a system which uses municipal solid waste (MSW) or municipal sewer sludge as the feedstock for producing solid, liquid, or gas fuel and is certified by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Secretary. We sincerely applaud your efforts to pass legislation that would advance the development of renewable energy in the United States, and consider MSW to be a resource rather than a liability. This bill proposes a major shift in public policy that may have significant benefits to the environment while simultaneously spurring the development of green jobs.

According to the United States EPA, our Country sends over 135 million tons of solid waste to landfills each year, with over 50 percent of that material being organic. This represents a plentiful resource that can be utilized to significantly diversify transportation fuels and energy resources. Non-incineration technologies, such as conversion technologies (CT) capable of converting MSW into renewable energy and biofuels, have made significant strides in development over the last decade. The February 2010 edition of *BioCycle Magazine* reported that 17 European countries will be using conversion technologies to convert about 6 million tons of MSW into renewable energy. Despite these developments abroad, the United States still does not have a commercial CT facility.

For over a decade the Task Force has been a consistent supporter of CTs and has advocated for their development in Los Angeles County. The Task Force along with other entities, including the City and the County of Los Angeles, have extensively evaluated various CTs from around the world and concluded that these technologies can fundamentally change the way we manage waste.

The Task Force supports CTs because of the following benefits:

- 1. Conversion technologies create green collar jobs and spur the economy** – development of CT facilities would create a range of new, high-tech jobs and contribute to the local economy by creating new, state-of-the-art, advanced infrastructure.
- 2. Conversion Technologies decrease net air emissions and greenhouse gases** – In February 2008, California Air Resources Board's Economic and Technology Advancement Advisory Committee (ETAAC) released its report entitled "Technologies and Policies to Consider for Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions in California." The ETAAC report noted that by conservative estimates, CTs have the potential to reduce annual greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by approximately 5 million metric tons of CO₂ equivalent in California. In fact, the Task Force estimates the potential GHG reduction may be three times greater, since CTs have a simultaneous triple benefit to the environment such as: (1) reduction of transportation emissions resulting from long distance shipping of waste; (2) elimination of methane production from waste that would otherwise be landfilled; and (3) displacement of the use of fossil fuels by net energy (fuel and electricity) produced by CTs.
- 3. Conversion technologies produce renewable energy and green fuels, thereby reducing our dependency on foreign oil** – CTs produce fuel and/or energy, thereby promoting energy independence. By utilizing CTs, the country can develop clean, locally produced renewable energy and green fuels including ethanol and biodiesel. Benefits from this independence include insulating

residents from energy market fluctuations and avoiding environmental impacts associated with the extraction, refining, transportation, and combustion of fossil fuels.

- 4. Conversion technologies are an effective and environmentally preferable alternative to landfilling** – Based on reports developed by the State of California Integrated Waste Management Board, the County of Los Angeles, and other independent agencies, CTs are environmentally preferable to land disposal practices. Copies of these reports are available at www.SoCalConversion.org. While the cost of utilizing CTs may exceed current landfill disposal rates, disposal costs are expected to increase as landfill capacity declines within the coming decade. Development of CT facilities is needed now to provide policy makers with environmentally preferable and economically viable options for the management of post-recycled residual solid waste.

- 5. Conversion technologies manage materials that are not practically recyclable and at the same time create an incentive to increase recycling** – Not all solid waste currently disposed can be recycled or composted. Contaminated organic materials, higher number plastics and other materials, which cannot be recycled or processed in an economically feasible manner, are ideal feedstock for CTs. At the same time, inorganic materials including glass, metals, and aggregate have no value for CTs, and therefore create an incentive to separate and recover those materials for recycling prior to the conversion process.

Currently underway, the Southern California Conversion Technology Demonstration Project, an endeavor spearheaded jointly by Los Angeles County and the Task Force, seeks to develop a highly-efficient CT facility onsite with a materials recovery facility (MRF). The CT facility will complement the MRF by utilizing the residual waste remaining after all recyclables are removed for beneficial use rather than landfilling. The goal of this project is to demonstrate the technical, environmental, and economic benefits of CTs. Upon successful operation, the project would showcase the viability of these technologies and spur private investment.

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The Task Force recognizes that H.R. 5856 incentivizes waste-to-energy facilities to the benefit of the environment and our national interests. Given the negative impacts of global climate change, these facilities will play an integral role in combating its effect on the environment. Therefore, the Task Force **supports** H.R. 5856. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Mike Mohajer of the Task Force at (909)592-1147.

Sincerely,



Margaret Clark, Vice-Chair
Los Angeles County Solid Waste Management Committee/
Integrated Waste Management Task Force and
Council Member, City of Rosemead

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cc: Each co-sponsor of H.R. 5856
Each Member of the California Federal Legislative Delegation
Each Member of the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors
National Association of Counties
National League of Cities
Each City Mayor in the County of Los Angeles
California State Association of Counties
League of California Cities
League of California Cities, Los Angeles County Division
Southern California Association of Governments
San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments
South Bay Cities Council of Governments
Gateway Cities Council of Governments
Each Member of the Los Angeles Integrated Waste Management Task Force
Each Member of the Alternative Technology Advisory Subcommittee
Each Recycling Coordinator in Los Angeles County