



H·R·R·A  
www.hrra.org

Old Town Hall  
162 Whisconier Road  
Brookfield, CT 06804

203.775.6256 x304  
203.740.9167  
info@hrra.org

r e d u c e | r e u s e | r e c y c l e

**Housatonic Resources Recovery Authority  
Public Hearing Testimony  
In Support of SB 93**

***An Act Concerning a Mercury Thermostat Collection and Financial Incentive Program***

Co-Chairs Roy and Meyer, Ranking Members Chapin and Roraback, and members of the Environment Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in support of SB 93. The Housatonic Resources Recovery Authority administers solid waste, recycling and household hazardous waste contracts for 11 member municipalities including the City of Danbury and the Towns of Bethel, Bridgewater, Brookfield, Kent, New Fairfield, New Milford, Newtown, Redding, Ridgefield and Sherman. We respectfully ask for your consideration and support of SB 93.

While in 2006 our state banned the sale of thermostats that contain mercury, 1.7 million legacy mercury thermostats remain in Connecticut homes. Each day some of those thermostats are disposed of, replaced with more energy efficient programmable thermostats. But less than 5% of those find their way to local household hazardous waste collections or other environmentally appropriate disposal locations.

The public is very concerned about the mercury released when a compact fluorescent bulb (CFL) is broken. EPA has even issued a 3 page downloadable step by step instruction sheet in how to handle a broken CFL. But while so many people worry about the mercury release from a broken CFL, many don't think twice about throwing an old thermostat into their regular garbage to end up being burned in a waste to energy plant or buried in a landfill. To put things in perspective, the average CFL light bulb contains about 4 milligrams of mercury, while each mercury thermostat contains about 4 grams or 1000 times more mercury than those CFLs so many of us obsess about.

The legacy thermostats in Connecticut homes contain over 11,500 pounds of mercury. How toxic is that? A single gram of mercury is enough to contaminate all the fish in a 20-acre lake, making them unsafe to eat. Connecticut banned the sale of mercury containing thermostats because mercury exposure is unsafe for humans. Even low levels of mercury can damage the development and functioning of the nervous system in growing and in-utero children. Keeping mercury out of our soil, air and water is one of the most important things we can do to protect the environment as well as public health.

The current manufacturer stewardship program intended to capture a significant quantity of the legacy thermostats at their end of life has not proven to be effective in Connecticut. However, the five dollar incentive for consumers that is currently used in Vermont and Maine has proven to be quite effective, increasing the recovery rate for mercury thermostats by a factor of ten.

For all these reasons, your vote in favor of SB 93 would be a vote in favor of a cleaner environment and a healthier future for the people of the HRRRA region and the state. Thank you for your consideration.