



**Environment Committee
Public Hearing
March 16, 2012**

Submitted by: Lynn Taborsak, Solid Waste Specialist
in support of

SB 350: An Act Requiring the Establishment of Manufacturer Mercury Thermostat Collection and Recycling Programs

The League of Women Voters of Connecticut is a non-partisan statewide organization comprised of over 1800 members and committed to effective public policy and the active involvement of citizens in their government. On behalf of the League, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

The League of Women Voters of Connecticut has consistently supported statewide recycling and environmentally sound waste disposal. We applaud the Environment Committee for providing strong leadership on efforts to reduce, reuse and recycle solid waste. Today you will hear testimony about the need to promote the collection and safe disposal of mercury thermostats that are used to control room temperature in residential, commercial and industrial buildings in Connecticut.

Mercury is highly toxic and although coal-fired power plants account for most mercury emissions, the improper disposal of mercury thermostats results in the release of about 9.6 tons of mercury in the U.S. Nine states have adopted collection and recycling programs like the one proposed in SB 350 to keep mercury out of the solid waste stream.

Mercury buried in a landfill can impact water supplies, streams and fish. Mercury in an incinerator can impact air quality. Mercury poisoning can cause tremors, insomnia, muscle atrophy, and migraine headaches. However if released into the environment, mercury can be much more dangerous and is linked to birth defects as well as impaired brain and nervous system development.

SB 350 is another example of good "Product Stewardship" where we ask the manufacturer to establish a program for the collection and safe disposal of a particular product. The major manufacturers of mercury thermostats already comply with the provisions of this bill in several other more populous states. In addition, the bill contains a provision to evaluate, revise and even repeal the program as manufacturers may develop other non-toxic alternatives to mercury.

This proposal will achieve a solid public policy objective: the removal of mercury from our solid waste stream. Please support SB 350.