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Recycling Industry Boosts Illinois Economy

SPRINGFIELD, Ill., April 24, 2002 – The recycling industry in Illinois is a \$12.2 billion industry, employing more than 56,000 people and offering widespread benefits to the Illinois economy, according to a new study commissioned by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs (DCCA) Bureau of Energy and Recycling. DCCA Director Pam McDonough presented the findings of the Illinois Recycling Economic Information Study (REI) during a legislative breakfast this morning sponsored by the Illinois Recycling Association. The Association represents a network of recyclers, including government, haulers, processors, not-for-profit groups, consultants and businesses that process recyclables or use them to make new products.

McDonough said the study was the first comprehensive measure of the recycling industry's impact to the Illinois economy. Key findings included:

- Illinois is home to more than 2,400 recycling and reuse establishments contributing \$269 million annually in state and local tax revenues.
- Recycling indirectly contributes an additional 40,000 jobs with a payroll of \$1.7 billion and receipts of \$5.7 billion to Illinois.
- Approximately 1.9 percent of the Illinois gross state product is attributable to the recycling and reuse industry.

Moreover, McDonough said recycling improves our state's quality of life and provides environmental benefits such as reducing pollution, conserving natural resources and saving energy.

"The recycling industry is a diverse combination of long-established recycling businesses such as paper and steel making, coupled with innovative new enterprises such as manufacturing recycled rubber products from scrap tires and recycling consumer electronics," McDonough said. "The future of recycling depends on consumers purchasing

recycled products, the development of new technologies, and the commitment by manufacturers to use recycled commodities as feedstock.”

DCCA has played a significant role in strengthening the recycling industry in Illinois. Through the Solid Waste Management Act, adopted in 1986, a state fund was established to operate recycling grant programs. This has enabled DCCA to award more than \$19 million in grants aimed at aiding communities throughout Illinois to divert recycled materials from disposal into landfills. These grants have enabled communities and businesses to start or expand recycling projects.

Additional programs supported by DCCA's Bureau of Energy and Recycling help support recycling activities by more than 1.5 million children in 3,000 Illinois schools, as well as initiatives at over 45,000 businesses throughout Illinois. In total, the Bureau has invested more than \$77 million in growing the recycling industry.

The Illinois REI study, conducted by R.W. Beck, Inc., is part of a nationwide study to measure the economic impacts of recycling. The national study was commissioned by the U.S. EPA and conducted by the National Recycling Coalition. Other Midwestern states participating in the study include Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa and Missouri. For more information on the national study, visit “Recycling is Working” at www.epa.gov/jtr.

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