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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

# **Before you stop your recycling program ...**

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Before you pull your containers back from the curb for good, the Virginia Recycling Association asks that you consider the benefits recycling brings to you, your community and to Virginia.

While the recent import restrictions imposed by China have caused disruptions in the marketplace for recyclable materials and a correction in the true cost of recycling, discontinuing curbside recycling will have a greater economic impact than you might think.

The scrap recycling industry in Virginia creates jobs and sustains other local businesses. According to the Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries (ISRI), the recycling industry in Virginia has contributed nearly \$1.9 billion in economic impact. The recycling industry is the first link in the manufacturing supply chain and plays a prominent role as a job creator, economic leader, and environmental steward. There are an estimated 8,669 full-time jobs supported by the recycling industry in Virginia that pay an average wage and benefits of \$62,500 per year. In addition, the scrap recycling industry in Virginia accounts for more than \$170 million in federal, state and local taxes. The repercussions of scaling back or discontinuing recycling programs will have a lasting effect on our local economy.

Many people think of recycling as a green, environmental activity but these economic facts and figures illustrate how recycling is a business like any other. Once a recyclable item leaves your curbside bin, it becomes a commodity. Just like soybeans or wheat, it has a tradeable market value. If the value of wheat drops, no one suggests never buying a loaf of bread again. Why should we do that with recycling? Like many other commodities, recycling is a cyclical industry; markets rise, fall and rise again. The current recycling market conditions have created opportunities for innovation and investment. Companies are seeking to invest in domestic markets for recyclable materials.

Recycled materials are a valuable link in a chain that provides natural resources and raw materials to manufacturers, providing them a cost-effective way to make their

products while reducing their environmental footprint. Companies like Coca-Cola recognize the value of recycling by announcing plans to buy back at least the same amount of recycled aluminum cans that it puts into the marketplace.

Even though some recycling programs are making changes in response to recycling markets, core recyclable materials, such as aluminum, metals, cardboard and plastics #1 and 2, are maintaining their value and marketability. Aluminum is the most valuable material in your recycling bin. The demand for aluminum keeps growing and recycling aluminum saves more than 90 percent of the energy compared to producing new metals. For these reasons, aluminum is also the most recycled material. Nearly 75 percent of all aluminum processed in the U.S. is still in use today. Clean cardboard is recycled into new cardboard at domestic papermills. Plastics #1 and 2 continue to be recycled into carpet, clothing and auto parts.

As you can see, recycling supports our local economy while preserving natural resources and reducing emissions in our air and water. Curbside recycling is still the most widely available, convenient, and effective way to offer people an opportunity to do the right thing with their waste.

You can support recycling in Virginia by taking action and raising your voice:

- Contact your local decision maker, draft a letter to the editor and tell them why you recycle.
- Recycle right. Learn what is recyclable in your community and only put those things in your recycling bin. Stop throwing everything in your cart hoping it will get recycled. It won't but it will keep other things from being recycled.
- Ask for better legislation and management of recyclable materials in Virginia.

This isn't about whether recycling is a good idea – it's about our economy and our livelihoods, our environment, and you.

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### ***About The Virginia Recycling Association***

*The Virginia Recycling Association (VRA) provides leadership in sustainable recycling and resource management in Virginia. VRA is the leading resource of recycling information for our members, the general public, the Virginia General Assembly, local government, business, and industry. For more information visit [www.vrarecycles.org](http://www.vrarecycles.org)*