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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2004

H O U S E R E S O L U T I O N

**RESPECTFULLY URGING THE MERCURY REDUCTION OVERSIGHT COMMISSION TO
PREVENT MERCURY POLLUTION FROM AUTO PARTS**

Introduced By: Representative Peter T. Ginaitt

Date Introduced: June 10, 2004

Referred To: House Environment and Natural Resources

1 WHEREAS, The Mercury Reduction Oversight Commission has the mission to prevent
2 human sources of mercury from contaminating the environment (air, water, soil); and

3 WHEREAS, The Mercury Reduction and Education Act passed by the General Assembly
4 in 2001 has declared that mercury is a persistent and toxic pollutant that bioaccumulates in the
5 environment, and mercury deposition has proven to be a significant problem in the northeastern
6 United States; and

7 WHEREAS, The Mercury Reduction and Education Act prohibits the disposal of
8 mercury-added products by means other than recycling or hazardous waste disposal as of July
9 2005; and

10 WHEREAS, Convenience light switches and other auto parts may contain mercury, and
11 therefore pose a threat to human health and the environment if improperly disposed of at the end
12 of their useful life; and

13 WHEREAS, An estimated 890 pounds of mercury has been released from Rhode Island
14 autos over the past 30 years and an equal amount could be released over the next two decades if
15 action is not taken soon to recover the mercury from vehicles before they are scrapped; and

16 WHEREAS, The Mercury Reduction and Education Act exempts mercury-added
17 components as contained in motor vehicles from the disposal ban (23-24.9-9) and collection plan
18 (23-24.9-10); and

19 WHEREAS, The state currently has no system to address the need to collect mercury

1 added to auto parts before they are incinerated or otherwise released into the environment; and

2 WHEREAS, Mercury from auto parts threatens the health of Rhode Islanders, and the
3 Rhode Island Health Department warns young children and pregnant or nursing women not to eat
4 any freshwater fish caught in Rhode Island due to mercury contamination; and

5 WHEREAS, The state of Maine has successfully implemented a mercury switch
6 collection program which has withstood legal challenges and is effectively collecting mercury-
7 added switches for recycling; and

8 WHEREAS, An effective mercury product recycling system must be convenient and
9 minimize costs to taxpayers and to consumers; and

10 WHEREAS, Auto manufacturers should be responsible for ensuring proper handling,
11 recycling and disposal of discarded products and that costs associated with consolidation, handling
12 and recycling be internalized by the manufacturers; and

13 WHEREAS, A system of producer responsibility for the collection and recycling of
14 mercury-added auto parts is the most effective and equitable means of keeping this toxic waste
15 out of the waste stream and environment, while also providing and a powerful incentive for
16 manufacturers to reduce toxins and re-design products for recycling; and

17 WHEREAS, Auto manufacturers should have the flexibility to act in partnership with
18 each other, with state, municipal and regional governments and with businesses that provide
19 collection and handling services to develop, implement and promote a safe and effective
20 recycling system for mercury-added auto parts; now, therefore be it

21 RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island and
22 Providence Plantations hereby respectfully urges the Mercury Reduction Oversight Commission
23 to develop a plan to address the collection and recycling of mercury added auto parts in a manner
24 that is convenient and minimizes costs to taxpayers and consumers; and

25 RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island and
26 Providence Plantations hereby respectfully urges the Mercury Reduction Oversight Commission
27 to submit to the General Assembly no later than January 30, 2005 a recommended plan, including
28 any legislation necessary to implement the plan, for the collection and recycling of mercury-
29 added auto parts that utilizes producer responsibility; and be it further

30 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and he hereby is authorized and directed to
31 submit duly certified copies of this resolution to the Chair of the Mercury Reduction Oversight
32 Commission, and all of the commission members.

