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Land of the Green

Reduce, reuse, recycle. With the most recent wave of environmental activism, we cannot seem to go a single day without being flooded with tips as to how to make our world a cleaner, greener place. The question that faces these planet advocates is how do we motivate those who are still unenthused, and who has the authority and influence to make it happen? The answer is simple: when self-fulfillment isn't enough, money talks, and perhaps the person with the broadest reach in our nation is the president. If I were the president, I would be able to use my influence as a national leader to propose new monetary incentives for Americans to recycle.

They say that only two things in life are certain: death and taxes. April 15 is a day most Americans fervently dread, so nothing comes as more of a relief than when we can write off various expenditures from our income taxes. These are known as deductions and can take on a variety of forms including donations to charity, theft losses, or real estate taxes associated with the purchase or sale of property, just to name a few. If I were president, I would propose an amendment to current federal tax law that would allow all recycled materials to be appraised for their value, which then could be deducted from each household's federal income tax. To do this, citizens would simply collect all their recyclables, take them to their local recycling service (this service is offered by many

garbage collection companies), and receive documentation for their appraised value. This could then be filed as a tax deduction.

The majority of Americans now have access to and patronize various private garbage collection companies, and these companies almost always offer curb-side pick-up. The price people pay for these services usually depends on the size of the load (some, however, have price ranges based on the number of trips made per month). It would be my proposal that private American refuse companies add another dimension to their price ranges: one based on size along with recyclable content. It is estimated that between 66 and 84 percent of all the trash thrown away by the average American household is recyclable. If garbage collection companies offered a significant discount on trash loads that had a recyclable content of, say, under 20 percent, it could motivate people to recycle more of their trash in order to be eligible for that discount. Also, if a trash load contains more than, say, 75 percent recyclables, garbage companies should charge a sizeable fee as compensation for the extra energy the companies will now have to expend to recycle those additional materials.

Recycling is absolutely essential to the survival of our planet, but many people require some kind of tangible compensation for their extra efforts. Money motivates people, and if I were the president of the United States, I would have the influence to strongly encourage or require individuals and trash companies to recycle through monetary means.