

Statement by Greenwich Recycling Advisory Board
at
CGA Public Hearing on February 2, 2009

**Re: HB 661 – Expanding the Beverage Container Redemption Provisions
to include Noncarbonated Beverages**

The Greenwich Recycling Advisory Board (GRAB), a volunteer group, works in partnership with the Town of Greenwich Department of Public Works to educate the community about recycling and to encourage and implement recycling initiatives.

GRAB has previously supported proposals to expand the Bottle Bill and is of the opinion that the provisions of HB 661 to include all noncarbonated beverages, beyond water, seem eminently sensible. We are ever hopeful that this long overdue legislation might finally be enacted.

When the current Bottle Bill was implemented 29 years ago, no-one could possibly have envisaged the proliferation of bottled water and myriad soft drinks that would flood the market. In Connecticut alone, over 426 million bottles of water are consumed each year. It's time to update the bill to reflect changes in market conditions.

Curbside recycling was not intended to replace deposit legislation. Many beverages are consumed away from home and, with no deposit incentive, these bottles are often trashed or become litter, particularly where no municipal recycling bins exist. And not all Connecticut communities offer curbside programs. Neither does single stream recycling, which is being advocated in place of deposit legislation by some in the food and beverage industry, capture containers used away from home.

The current Bottle Bill has proven extremely effective in the reduction of litter and recovery of recyclable material. The present redemption recycling rate is between 65-70% (far better than curbside recycling) which would indicate that consumers are interested in redeeming deposits. No mention is made of what would happen to unclaimed deposits which are presently retained by the distributor. Although it appears current escheats may be claimed by the state, we would support some portion being used to fund recycling education in future.

States with bottle bills have much higher levels of recovery than non-bottle bill states and material is less contaminated than through curbside collections, making it more attractive to buyers and users of recycled materials. Water bottles are made from PET (#1), a petroleum product and the most widely recycled type of plastic, for which there is a strong market.

Our environment should not be held hostage by the beverage industry and grocery retailers. We all need to take steps to conserve natural resources, maximize recovery of recyclables, reduce litter, release fewer pollutants into the air and even save money by reducing waste. The Department of Environmental Protection's aggressive waste management plan, calling for a dramatic increase in recycling by 2024, is going to require measures such as HB 661 to achieve the goal of 58% recycling rate. GRAB strongly urges the passage of legislation to expand the beverage container redemptions.

Sally Davies, Chair

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