



198 Park Rd., 2nd Fl. | info@EnvironmentConnecticut.org  
West Hartford, CT 06119 | P (860) 231-8842  
www.EnvironmentConnecticut.org | F (860) 233-7574

Written Testimony of Christopher Phelps, Environment Connecticut Program Director  
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Environment Committee

Monday February 2, 2009

Supporting Senate Bill 661, An Act Expanding The Beverage Container Redemption  
Provisions To Include Noncarbonated Beverages.

Senator Meyer, Representative Roy, and members of the Environment Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of SB 661, An Act Expanding The Beverage Container Redemption Provisions To Include Noncarbonated Beverages. Environment Connecticut strongly supports this legislation.

2009 marks the 7<sup>th</sup> legislative session in a row in which I have testified before this committee in support of an expanded Bottle Bill. During that time, the specifics of this proposal have changed, but its inherent common sense has not.

When the Bottle Bill was first enacted, the overwhelming majority of disposable beverage containers purchased by Connecticut consumers contained carbonated beverages. Since then, the market for disposable containers of non-carbonated beverages, such as bottled water and juices, has grown dramatically. Including such containers in the Bottle Bill will help ensure that this law continues to play its important role in reducing litter and increasing recycling rates in our state.

Taking the step of expanding the Bottle Bill to include noncarbonated beverages is not unprecedented. If it were to do so, Connecticut would find itself in good company. In 2007, Oregon expanded its Bottle Bill to include water and created a task force to consider including other non-carbonated beverages and raising the bottle deposit. In 2009, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality has introduced legislation implementing the recommendations of that task force to establish a goal of 80% minimum beverage container recycling rate, expand the Bottle Bill to include other beverages such as sports drinks, juice, wine, and distilled liquors, and increase that state's container deposit to 10 cents in order to maximize the return rate for deposit containers.

SB 661 would apply similar provisions to update Connecticut's Bottle Bill for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Environment Connecticut urges the General Assembly to approve this legislation.

## **The Bottle Bill Works**

The Bottle Bill ranks among the most successful environmental protection statutes on Connecticut's books. Before it was enacted in 1978, millions of bottles and cans littered our state's beaches, parks, and roadways. Millions more were thrown into landfills. Today, over 1.1 billion cans and bottles are redeemed for deposit each year in Connecticut. That is approximately 70% of deposit containers and 55% of all beverage containers sold in the state.

The Bottle Bill, in conjunction with existing recycling programs, allows Connecticut to maximize recycling of beverage containers. In fact, Connecticut DEP reports that *states with bottle bills have much higher recycling rates for containers than non-bottle bill states*.<sup>1</sup> In general, Bottle Bill states recycle over 80% of beverage containers, while non-Bottle Bill states recycle less than 40%.<sup>2</sup> The Bottle Bill maximizes recycling results. Most importantly, it does so without any expenditure by state or municipal government.

The costs of the Bottle Bill are internalized to the cost of the product, following the "polluter pays" model. Responsibility for the costs associated with litter control and recycling through the Bottle Bill is borne by producers of beverage containers. Taxpayers and consumers are relieved of the burden. Further, by escheating unclaimed deposits to the state as required by PA 09-1, the state can maximize the benefits for consumers and taxpayers. Environment Connecticut urges the General Assembly to consider dedicating future revenue from unclaimed Bottle Bill deposits to funding expanded state and municipal recycling programs.

## **Update the Bottle Bill – A Cost-Effective Way to Boost Recycling and Reduce Litter**

As noted above, over 1.1 billion cans and bottles are redeemed for deposit each year in Connecticut. Without the Bottle Bill, these containers would end up burdening Connecticut's municipal solid waste and recycling programs or littering our state's parks, roadways and beaches. The Bottle Bill's 5-cent deposit creates a monetary incentive that results in recycling of these waste materials without costing taxpayers a single cent.

By expanding the bottle deposit to include noncarbonated beverages, SB 661 will update the Bottle Bill for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the years since the Bottle Bill's adoption, non-carbonated beverages, such as bottled water, have become an increasing part of the beverage market. Based on evaluation of past beverage industry sales of non-carbonated beverages, the Container Recycling Institute has estimated that as hundreds of millions of additional containers would be redeemed for deposit and recycling annually under an expanded Bottle Bill. As with the current system, this would be achieved at no cost to taxpayers.

---

<sup>1</sup> Connecticut DEP website, <http://www.ct.gov/dep/cwp/view.asp?a=2714&q=324834>. Accessed 1/30/09

<sup>2</sup> Science Applications International, "Packaging Restrictions Research: Targeting Packaging for Reduction, Reuse, Recycling and Recycled Content", 2000, p.36

The Bottle Bill's success speaks for itself. Hawaii adopted a new Bottle Bill in 2002. New York is considering expanding its Bottle Bill to include non-carbonated containers. In 2007, Oregon expanded its Bottle Bill to include bottled water and is considering legislative action expanding to more beverages as well as increasing the deposit to 10-cents.<sup>3</sup> By expanding the Bottle Bill's 70%+ success rate for redemption to noncarbonated beverages and increasing the deposit to 10-cents, SB 661 brings Connecticut's Bottle Bill into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Connecticut needs to redouble its efforts to combat litter, increase recycling rates, and reduce the amount of solid waste we produce and dispose of in polluting incinerators and landfills. Expanding the Bottle Bill can be an important component of such an effort. An updated Bottle Bill offers opportunities for Connecticut to leverage the success of the current system to further these efforts and increase recycling success in municipalities across the state.

Unlike our neighbors in Massachusetts, Connecticut has not previously retained unclaimed deposits. Instead, this money has been left in the hands of beverage distributors. As a result, this gave the industry a windfall that has been estimated as high as \$20 million annually. Since the deposits are essentially consumer's unclaimed property, it is appropriate as a matter of policy for this money to escheat to the state for uses that benefit consumers. Environment Connecticut applauds the decision by the legislature to escheat unclaimed deposits to the state as enacted in PA 09-1. We urge you to consider dedicating the revenue from unclaimed deposits to funding state and municipal recycling programs with the goal of increasing overall recycling rates for a wide range of recyclable materials statewide.

## Conclusion

Environment Connecticut supports an updated Bottle bill for Connecticut. The Bottle Bill is a proven, effective method of reducing litter and maximizing container recycling rates. We urge the General Assembly to enact SB 661 and expand the Bottle Bill to include noncarbonated beverages, increase the deposit to ten cents, and consider dedicating unclaimed deposit revenues to funding expanded state and municipal recycling programs.

Sincerely,

Christopher J. Phelps  
Environment Connecticut

---

<sup>3</sup> Oregon Department of Environmental Quality website, <http://www.deq.state.or.us/lq/sw/bottlebill/>, accessed 11/1/09.