

TOWN OF MANSFIELD
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS



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To: Environment Committee

From: Virginia Walton, Mansfield Recycling Coordinator

Date: February 2, 2009

Re: Testimony Supporting Bills 661 and 662 Expanding Connecticut's Deposit Law for Beverage Containers and Bill 5215 Imposing a 5 cent Fee on Plastic Shopping Bags

The Mansfield Solid Waste Advisory Committee supports the expansion of Connecticut's "bottle bill". The current system of placing a five-cent deposit on beverage containers serves the best interest of the citizens of Connecticut. It provides an incentive for recycling bottles and cans generated at home and away from home. It also supports the State's amended Solid Waste Management Plan and the Climate Change Action Plan.

Mansfield's curbside recycling program is not able to capture the growing number of plastic, glass and metal containers consumed in our increasingly on-the-go society. Single-serve beverages are commonly consumed on the road, at events and in public areas. One way to better ensure that these containers are recycled is to expand the deposit to ten cents and include non-carbonated beverages.

Our Town would benefit from the bottle bill's expansion since a significant portion of our Town's residents are transient - University of Connecticut students. The bottle bill provides a consistent backbone to recycling in a State where there are 169 communities with 169 different recycling programs. Each municipality has its own method for sorting and collecting recyclables. Even within each town, recycling misinformation persists - ask any recycling coordinator. It is a challenge to keep residents informed. Not so with the bottle bill - it is common knowledge that cans and bottles can be recycled. It is clear cut and easy to understand. Regardless of their Connecticut hometown, UConn students are familiar with the bottle bill. If nothing else, they recycle their deposit cans and bottles. A deposit can be enough of an incentive for a college student to recycle their beer cans and soda bottles. The bottle bill seems to work for a mobile population.

We believe Bill 662, which includes all non-carbonated beverages will help move the State's recycling rate forward. Bill 661, which expands to water bottles, is also a good step forward, although we prefer the inclusion of all non-carbonated beverage containers. Whichever bill is passed, we would like to see some of the escheats channeled back into DEP for recycling programs.

The Mansfield Solid Waste Advisory Committee also supports bill 5215, which imposes a five-cent fee on plastic shopping bags. The five cents will then be used to help fund DEP. We would like to see this bill include paper bags as well (similar to bill 5207 or 5492), in order to encourage shoppers to use reusable bags. Inexpensive reusable bags are widely available now. In fact, all the cloth bags I use were given to me - they make great gifts. Although our Town does have a collection for plastic retail bags at the transfer station, we support any effort that creates a nudge to reuse and produce less waste.