

Environment Committee Testimony

By Michael Alger, Assistant District Director

Big Y Foods, Inc.

Friday, February 28, 2014

Testimony in Opposition to SB No. 67

Good Afternoon, Chairman Gentile, Chairman Meyer and Members of the Environment Committee. My name is Michael Alger, I am an Assistant District Director for Big Y Foods. I am testifying in opposition to **SB No. 67 An Act Concerning the Inclusion of Juices, Teas and Sport Drinks under Connecticut's Bottle Bill.**

Big Y operates 30 supermarkets in Connecticut and I supervise the operations of 15 of those in our Central (eastern CT) District. My role involves working closely with over 2500 employees, listening to their concerns and creating solutions for the problems and opportunities that affect them the most. Along with our employees, I work hard to make our customers' shopping experience an excellent one by constantly asking for their feedback. I was also a Store Director for over 20 years and would like to speak from that perspective also.

I am here today to voice Big Y Foods, along with my personal opposition to SB No. 67, expanding the beverage container system to include juice, punch, sports drink and tea containers.

Having been in the supermarket industry and witnessed, first hand, the effects of expansion of the system into water bottles, we have seen the following negative impacts:

- Overwhelmed storage areas at store level. What amounts to "trash" ends up being stored, awaiting pick-up, in areas meant for food. Our facilities have limited storage areas and adding on to store empty bottles does not make any business sense.
- Negative impact on the customer's experience at home and in our stores, dealing with a waste item, waiting in longer lines and the general inconvenience of dealing with the process.
- Storage of returnables (waiting for redemption) creates a breeding ground for infestation and other complications to our very strong Food Safety programs.
- Our stores lose money on each bottle handled. Currently, we lose approximately 2 -4 cents on each container. These expenses will invariably end up increasing our customer's weekly grocery bill.
- We would much rather schedule our employees to provide customer service (registers, bagging, deli counters...) rather than spending their time emptying machines and carting trash from front to back of store.

Big Y cares about the environment. Reducing waste, educating our employees, maximizing our energy efficiency – we do whatever we can do to minimize our company’s impact on the environment. We have many recycling programs currently and are strong supporters for a comprehensive solid waste management program. This bill is bad for business and will cost consumers additional expense.

I, personally, am an avid recycler and big fan of Single Stream Recycling that occurs in my hometown. To me this is the most effective and productive way to deal with empty bottles. I know I am doing the right thing and my town benefits from the revenue.

For these reasons, I urge you vote NO on SB no. 67.