



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF CONNECTICUT, INC.**  
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**CGA Environment Committee**

**PUBLIC HEARING**  
**Wednesday, February 4, 2015**

S.B. No. 349 AAC SINGLE-USE CARRYOUT PLASTIC AND PAPER BAGS AND THE USE OF REUSABLE BAGS

H.B. No. 6033 AAC CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF JUICES, TEAS AND SPORTS DRINKS UNDER CONNECTICUT'S BOTTLE BILL.

Comments submitted by Carolyn Bayne, Director of Natural Resources, and Deepika Saksena, Climate Change Specialist

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**THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF CONNECTICUT IS A NON-PARTISAN STATEWIDE ORGANIZATION COMPRISED OF 1600 MEMBERS IN 27 LOCAL CHAPTERS WHO ARE COMMITTED TO EFFECTIVE PUBLIC POLICY AND THE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF CITIZENS IN THEIR GOVERNMENT.**

The League of Women Voters of Connecticut appreciates the opportunity to comment today on Senate Bill 349 and House Bill 6033.

**Comments on SB 349 Concerning Single Use Carryout Plastic And Paper Bags And The Use Of Reusable Bags.**

The League promotes policies to reduce the generation of and increase the reuse and recycling of solid and hazardous wastes. To that end, we support efforts to reduce the use of disposable, single-use carryout shopping bags.

Disposable plastic bags are a major source of litter and pollution in our environment. According to the EPA, less than 12% of single-use plastic bags in the U.S. are recycled (<http://www.epa.gov/osw/conservation/materials/plastics.htm>). The majority of an estimated 100 billion bags distributed here annually end up in landfills, incinerators, oceans, waterways, and throughout the land. It is important to note that plastic bags do not biodegrade; they photodegrade into increasingly smaller bits that contaminate both soil and waterways, harming fish and other wildlife. Incineration is not a desirable option, as it releases toxins that are harmful to human health.

The League supports a phase-out of plastic bags on the basis that they harm our lands, waterways and air quality. The League also recognizes that reusable bags have the least negative impact on the environment and are therefore preferable to any type of single-use bag. However, we believe that more consideration must be given to the phase-out of paper bags, as their proper disposal (or lack thereof) does not present the same issues as plastic. It should be noted that California, the first state to enact a ban on plastic bags, does permit the use of paper bags for a fee.

### **Comments on HB 6033 Concerning The Inclusion Of Juices, Teas And Sports Drinks Under Connecticut's Bottle Bill**

The League has consistently supported statewide recycling policies and environmentally-sound waste management. In the past, we have joined with other environmental groups to support passage of the state's successful paint recycling program, mattress recycling program and mercury thermostat recycling program.

We know after thirty years that redemption rates of 65 to 75% can be expected for deposit containers. It is an incentive that really works in our state. Beverage consumers redeem their bottles and cans. The result is decreased litter, especially on beaches and in parks, which may lack adequate recycling opportunities. We are concerned, however, about the impact that expanding the beverage redemption program may have on the pricing of single stream recycling, where these items can now be recycled. We are also concerned about the capacity of redemption centers and retailers to store and process additional beverage containers.

We need to make it easier for people to recycle all kinds of beverage containers with appropriate receptacles in our parks, on our campuses, inside fitness facilities and throughout our towns and cities. We could use unclaimed deposits to support recycling education and provide recycling receptacles. It will not only help us reduce litter, it will reduce our carbon footprint.

The League of Women Voters of Connecticut appreciates the opportunity to submit these comments.