

Testimony on SB 312 AA Requiring the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to Study Bottle Bill Beverage Container Refund Values and Redemption Fees

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Senator Leone, Representative Baram, Committee Members and staff, my name is Joel Gordes. I am an independent energy consultant representing myself. From 1976 onward I became active in politics due to my involvement with groups actively supporting a bottle bill. (See attached.) It's passage proved to me that citizen participation and perseverance can make a difference in bettering the environment even if groups, with more significant monetary resources, opposed such actions. This eventually led to my serving on this esteemed committee in the late 1980's.

The Statement of Purpose says: "To require the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection to study the repeal of the refundable bottle bill deposit and the implementation of a nonrefundable four-cent recycling fee, to be used to promote recycling and anti-littering programs in the state."

Please excuse me for maybe being a bit paranoid but the very title of this bill and its statement of purpose seems to imply that some people want to roll back the intent of the current legislative intent and return us to the days when parts of the state looked like a dump. Without the monetary incentive to pick up your own or some other persons' cans and bottles, it is my opinion we will see unfettered litter once again. And think about it, what we originally did by putting a price on such discarded junk was employed the much revered mechanism of the free market at its best to provide a monetary reward for doing the right thing.

As to this proposed nonrefundable recycling fee, this provides nothing but a disincentive to pick up the most visible detritus of modern society. It even deprives those among us who may be the most needy from a realizing a meager income gained by doing what too many in our society are too lazy or dense to do by themselves. Even though the body of the bill where it says "to be used to promote recycling and anti-littering programs in the state" leaves it open to suspicion. Depending upon the thoughts behind the language used, such a fund might be easily diverted to other uses; deficit reduction for instance. Believe me, from one who has dealt with that problem too, there are far better ways to accomplish that.

Reducing the amount to four cents is also a travesty. Actually, we need to take into consideration that the mere nickel we have paid since 1978 has had its value eroded over time. We need to calculate the escalation due to inflation using the consumer price index from that date till now to INCREASE the rate. This would amount to \$0.15¹ in today's world for what we should be charging or use for deficit reduction.

That being said, I suggest this bill be killed immediately and without remorse. Thank you for your time and attention.

¹ [Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI Calculator](#)

Bottle Bill, Land Use Pleas Heard By Groppo

By Claire Vreeland

WINSTED—Proponents of the bottle bill and the preservation of agricultural lands met Tuesday with Rep. John G. Groppo D-63 at the Northwestern Connecticut Community College Learning Center on South Main Street.

Also voicing opinions at the meeting were residents concerned with the lack of transportation facilities from Winsted to Hartford and Torrington.

The meeting discussed Connecticut's lack of an energy conservation and development plan.

Moderating the meeting was Joel N. Gordes of Colebrook, district chapter head of the Connecticut Citizens' Action Group.

Going on record in support of the bottle bill were local granges, the state grange, the Norfolk-Colebrook Garden Club and the Winsted Conservation Commission.

Groppo stated that he had voted for the bottle bill the first time around but voted against the House version in the Senate because he became "sick of the political shenanigans connected with new versions of the bill."

"I am well aware of the need in the state, and in this town for cleaning up of litter. Years ago when I was involved with Boy Scouting we used to go around Highland Lake each spring to clean the litter. But I am disgusted with the legislative process in regards to this bill at least."

Mrs. Kathleen Barnes, a recycling consultant with the Regional Refuse District, suggested a redemption center for bottles. A representative of the Norfolk-Colebrook Garden Club suggested trucking bottles rather than to have individuals make constant trips back and forth to the recycling center.

Groppo challenged: "What kind of a reaction do you think you would get with that proposal in a town meeting? Winsted spends \$10,000 a year just to have a truck pick up in the residential districts once a week."

Groppo said he would vote for the bottle bill even though he had previously refused to sign a petition for an amendment which would change the bill. "They (politicians) tried to box it in with the amendment," he said.

Groppo charged that voters do not want to notice things which they cannot see directly affects them. He said this is true in the case of preservation of agricultural lands. "But if they put 50 families from the north end of Hartford in the community of Norfolk, you'd see a reaction."

He said he feels regret for the loss of two outstanding dairy farms in the Winchester area during the past year.

As for preservation of farm lands, Groppo said the "biggest hangup is in funding. Sen. Beck and Agriculture Commissioner George Wilber have proposed a tax on all real estate of one-tenth of one per cent to buy and conserve farm land."

Philip Prelli read a proclamation from the state grange urging legislation to

preserve farm lands.

Groppo said it was unfortunate that those representing urban areas and minority groups have the largest votes. "They have the votes while we have the land," he said.

Speaking informally on behalf of land conservation, Prelli said "They understand food though. They must be educated to realize we need this land to produce food."

Groppo said some legislators have been very concerned about the problem and that he had

tried for two years to fund it in an appropriations bill. "It finally went to the Finance Committee and in the last minute it fell by the wayside."

He said the state has very little prime land and that most of the undeveloped areas are woodlands and ledge, not suitable for farming.

Speaking of the lack of transportation facilities here, Groppo said the

reaction of Winsted residents is typical. "They waited until 20 years after the railroad tracks were

torn up to protest it," he said.

Mrs. Leland Harding said adequate mass transportation is needed here, going to the cities at an early hour so residents can get to work or perform other business.

She stated she had paid six dollars to take a taxi to Torrington to the Unemployment office and that sum represents a one way fare.

A commuter bus run by the Aetna Insurance Company daily is full and has a waiting list.

Groppo said the Arrow Line would still be in business here if Winsted people had supported it. Currently the Department of Transportation is making a feasibility study and has recommended the state purchase 200 buses, two of them for Winsted.

Gordes said it is time for residents to pressure D.O.T. to come up with a commuter plan.

He said government is only as effective as people make it and that more should find ways in which to become involved.



Meeting The Public

Rep. John Groppo, left, and Joel Gordes, district director for Connecticut Citizens Action Group, involve about 20 area residents in a discussion of current legislative issues and what people can do about them.

Killian Says Image Tarnished

NEW HAVEN, Conn. (UPI) — Lt. Gov. Robert Killian said Tuesday night he believes the image of the Connecticut State Police has been tarnished by the Peter A. Reilly case.

"I think that generally speaking the State Police Department has been damaged. I think the whole criminal justice system probably has suffered as a result of this, and this is something which in my judgment is most regrettable," he said.

Wednesday, October 19, 1977

15 Cents