



TO: Sen. Cathy Osten and Rep. Phil Miller, Co-Chairs; Honorable Members of the Planning and Development Committee

FROM: The Connecticut League of Conservation Voters, Inc.

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 422 AAC CONCERNING RESIDENTIAL WATER RATES, PUBLIC DRINKING WATER SUPPLY EMERGENCIES AND SELLERS OF BOTTLED WATER**

The Connecticut League of Conservation Voters (CTLCV) stands in strong support of SB 422 WITH REVISIONS in order to provide critical safeguards for the responsible management of our public water supply.

We respectfully request that you support substitute language which will:

- **Impose a moratorium on any new large water capacity agreements until the State Water Plan is completed and addresses this issue**
- **Protect residents, not water bottlers, during a drought.** If the Department of Public Health declares a Drought Advisory, production of bottled water to be shipped out of state should stop.
- **Rescind water rate discounts for water bottlers.** Water rate discounts should go to citizens who are conserving, while water bottlers that extract large amounts of our municipal water and spring water should pay full rate, or preferably pay a premium.
- **Rescind the Special Sewer Service Charge discount for water bottlers (now known as the Clean Water Project Charge).** Corporations should pay full rate just as CT ratepayers have paid for years to build infrastructure for clean water.
- **Re-establish a citizen MDC (Metropolitan District Commission) watchdog committee.**

The deal that Niagara made with the MDC to bottle millions of gallons of Connecticut water and truck them out of Connecticut is a threat to all of the state's water supply. The General Assembly can and must support this proposal by Senator Bye that would establish reasonable limits and the sale of water. Below is an overview of the problem and how we have arrived at the need for the state legislation. What happened in Bloomfield could happen elsewhere in Connecticut. We urge you to take decisive action at this critical moment when the most valuable asset of our state—our water—is in peril of unchecked exploitation.

Respectfully submitted,  
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# CONNECTICUT WATER WARS

Across the country, for-profit water bottlers have quietly partnered with economic developers to reap profits off municipal water systems and community aquifers. Once water utilities grant the bottlers permits, they have unfettered access to large quantities of water, drought or no drought, community approval or not. Usually these “water rights” have no expiration date, are immune from reversal and can supersede those of local landowners. Aquifers and streams can be sucked dry as water bottlers ship local water out of state.

Niagara Bottling is seeking a northeastern hub for its water export business, and aims to add to the 19 plants it owns across the US. Having been recently driven from Kingston NY by citizens alarmed at its attempt to control 25% of their water capacity, Niagara is hoping to find a home in Bloomfield, CT. It needs cheap and plentiful water.

**What is proposed?** Niagara Bottling wants to take 1.8 million gallons of MDC (Metropolitan District Commission) water per day, in addition to water brought in by tanker trucks from undisclosed springs throughout our state; A highly mechanized robotic factory with up to 4 bottling lines, operating non-stop 24 hours/day, each line capable of churning out 2.6 million plastic bottles per line/per day); Thirty-eight to 75 mostly low wage shift jobs; A new \$8 million MDC bond to finance extension of a water main to carry extra water to the plant; Up to 200 large diesel trucks/day heading out to highways of the Northeast.

**How did this happen?** Disturbingly, and in a recurrent pattern, the hasty approval process for Niagara lacked transparency and citizen input. Developers applied for wetlands and zoning permits in third party names, never mentioning “Niagara”. A \$4.1M tax abatement was presented and voted upon the same night, without public input, by a town council eager to approve. That same day, in MDC boardrooms, ordinances were changed to provide “large industrial super-users” both a water and sewer rate discount.

**What’s wrong with this picture?** A CT state water plan is even now being drawn up to make balanced decisions over where our waters should be allocated and how they should be protected. Due out in Jan, 2017, it challenges the concept that regional water utilities can autonomously control public water. MDC capacity numbers (the amount of water we theoretically have to use, hold or sell) have not been updated in decades. Climate change makes these figures even more uncertain. Hydrologic source data is currently being withheld from public view as part of classified Homeland Security data. The CT State Drought Plan, drawn up in 2003, does not prioritize the public over private industry. All are treated equally. In a true Drought Emergency with 50 days or less of water available, the DPH (Dept of Public Health) can mandate 25% water restrictions on residents, but trucks can still be rolling out of CT with bottled water headed north. While ordinary citizens do their best to conserve water, this mega-user will instead be incentivized by lower rates to use more.