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American Littoral Society ♦ Audubon New York ♦ Bottle and Can Redemption Association ♦  
Citizens Campaign for the Environment ♦ Container Recycling Institute ♦ Environmental  
Advocates of New York ♦ Empire State Beer Distributors Association ♦ Hudson River Sloop  
Clearwater ♦ Land Trust Alliance ♦ League of Women Voters of New York State ♦ Long Island  
Drinking Water Coalition ♦ Long Island Environmental Voters Forum ♦ Long Island Pine Barrens  
Society ♦ New York Environmental Watch ♦ New York Farm Bureau ♦ New York-New Jersey Trail  
Conference ♦ New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) ♦ New York Redeemers  
Coalition ♦ New York State Association of Reduction, Reuse and Recycling (NYSAR3) ♦ New  
York State Bottle and Can Redemption Association (BACRA) ♦ North Shore Land Alliance ♦  
Onondaga County Resource Recovery Agency (OCRRA) ♦ Parks & Trails New York ♦ Promesa  
Systems ♦ Scenic Hudson ♦ Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter ♦ SURE WE CAN Redemption Center ♦  
Surfrider Foundation (New York City, Central Long Island, and Eastern Long Island Chapters) ♦  
The Nature Conservancy

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Bottle Bill Update Will Yield Big Benefits for New Yorkers** ***New Report Shows Unclaimed Deposits Could Exceed \$218 Million Per Year***

(Albany) Representatives from a coalition of environmental groups, businesses, local governments, and community-based organizations called on state lawmakers to approve Governor David Paterson's proposed "Bigger Better Bottle Bill" in the 2009-2010 State Budget.

Releasing new data on the environmental benefits of updating New York's bottle law, they held up bags containing 148 empty bottles and cans, representing the number of non-carbonated beverages New Yorkers drink every second, and the portion that get recycled (24 containers, or 16%). Speakers, who included state legislators, recycling advocates, small business owners, and New York City community leaders, discussed how updating the bottle bill will help improve recycling rates, create new jobs, and benefit communities.

The "Bigger Better Bottle Bill" updates New York's 5-cent deposit law on beer, soda and wine coolers to include non-carbonated, non-alcoholic beverages such as bottled water, iced tea and sports drinks. It also creates a new revenue stream for New York by requiring beverage companies to return any unclaimed container deposits to the state. The Governor's office projects that this measure would generate \$118 million for the state next year.

### **New Study Finds Non-Carbonated Beverage Sales Up, Recycling Rates Down**

The Container Recycling Institute (CRI), a Washington D.C.-based nonprofit research organization, released an updated Beverage Market Data Analysis (BMDA) for New York, using 2006 sales data. According to CRI, more than 8.9 billion bottles and cans of carbonated beverages, which are currently covered under the Bottle Bill, were sold in New York in 2006, and more than 4.6 billion containers of non-carbonated beverages, which would be included in the deposit program if the Bigger Better Bottle Bill were enacted.

Between 2002, when the campaign to update the Bottle Bill was launched, and 2006, noncarbonated beverages grew from 22% of New York's beverage market (excluding wine and liquor) to 34%. Overall sales of these beverages in New York grew from 3.4 billion containers in 2002 to more than 4.6 billion in 2006.

Betty McLaughlin, CRI's executive director, noted that New York's data are consistent with national trends. "Beverage sales have risen dramatically nationwide, with non-carbonated beverages accounting for 95% of the growth in total sales from 2000 to 2006. During that same time period, beverage container recycling rates nationwide declined from 41% to 34%. Falling recycling rates and rapid growth in beverage sales prompted both the aluminum and glass industries last fall to openly support expanding bottle bills like New York's."

### **Bigger Better Bottle Bill Builds on Success of the Existing Law**

"The bottle bill is by far New York's most effective recycling and litter prevention program," said Senator Antoine Thompson (D-Buffalo), Chair of the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee. "While the system currently works well, the legislature would have surely included water bottles and such in the first bottle bill when it passed if they had known then how the non-carbonated beverage market would grow exponentially. Updating this law will increase recycling, conserve energy and resources, and reduce waste in landfills."

"The current bottle deposit law has been New York's most important and successful litter prevention and recycling program," said Assemblyman Bob Sweeney (D-Suffolk), Chair of the Assembly Environmental Conservation Committee. "When this measure was originally passed in 1982, no one could have envisioned the growth in popular beverages like sports drinks, teas and bottled water. This legislation simply updates the law to include these non-carbonated beverage containers, expanding a proven incentive to help remove them from our waste stream, roadways and communities."

### **Unclaimed Deposits Could be Significantly Higher than State Estimates**

Using CRI's sales estimates and the state's redemption rate of 68% in 2005-2006, the unclaimed deposits retained by beverage companies in New York totaled \$144 million in 2006, and would have been \$218 million under an expanded bottle law. This is considerably higher than the state's revenue projections, because the state relies on voluntary reporting from the beverage industry, while CRI bases its estimates on marketing data.

"New York is out of step with other states, such as Massachusetts, Maine, Michigan, Hawaii, and soon Connecticut, which require unclaimed container deposits to be transferred to the state," said Laura Haight, Senior Environmental Associate with NYPIRG. "With New York facing devastating budget shortfalls, it would be indefensible for state law-makers to cut funding for core needs like health care and environmental protection, while letting beverage companies continue to pocket the public's abandoned nickels."

Haight cautioned that although the potential revenue from the Bigger Better Bottle Bill could be far higher than state projections, until the state legislature agrees to update the bottle law, there is no certainty that all, or even any, of the unclaimed deposits will end up in state coffers. "The environmental community is unified in calling for the State Environmental Protection Fund to continue to be financed through its existing revenue stream," Haight said. "The unclaimed deposits should supplement, not replace, current environmental funding."

Emmett Pepper, Hudson Valley and Connecticut Program Director for Citizens Campaign for the Environment, noted that New York's neighbor, Connecticut, is moving forward to modernize its bottle bill

law. As a part of its deficit reduction program for the current fiscal year, Connecticut Governor Jodi Rell and the Connecticut General Assembly redirected the unclaimed bottle deposits to state programs. Additionally, Governor Rell's proposed budget, released on February 4, expands the bottle bill to cover non-carbonated beverages, which would increase unclaimed deposit revenues to the state.

“New York should join Connecticut in redirecting consumers' unclaimed bottle deposits for the public good, instead of padding corporate bonuses,” said Pepper. “Modernizing the bottle bill to include non carbonated beverages benefits the environment immensely and in these tough economic times, corporate giveaways are a luxury we simply cannot afford.”

### **Quotes from Speakers at the News Conference**

Jeff Edwards, representing the N.Y.S. Association of Reduction, Reuse and Recycling (NYSAR3), discussed how expanding the Bottle Bill will increase recycling rates and save local governments money. “The less material that your municipal waste collection and recycling program has to manage, the less the program costs,” Edwards said. “It is really just that simple.”

Carlos Nazario, Chairman of Promesa Systems, a community development corporation (CDC) located in New York City with a focus on health care, housing and economic development, called on state legislators to update the Bottle Bill, which will provide for cleaner inner city roads, parks, beaches and provide much needed jobs. “Promesa, through an affiliation with ‘The Neighborhood Redemption Centers,’ has provided employment opportunities to those least able to find jobs in disadvantaged areas,” said Mr. Nazario. “The best cure for the social ills of our communities is a job and a pay check. This bill will potentially provide the State of New York with 900 additional employment positions in existing redemption centers and may provide hundreds of added jobs and economic development opportunities in this time when the state is experiencing an unprecedented rate of unemployment.”

Sheila Rivers, owner of EZ Bottle and Can Returns in Monroe County and chair of the NYS Bottle and Can Redemption Association (BACRA), said: “When the Bigger Better Bottle Bill passes, redemption centers across the state will be growing and expanding, creating thousands of new green jobs in the process.” BACRA represents redemption centers across the state, most of which are owner-operated small businesses.

Deacon Jimmy Stillwell of St. John the Baptist Church in Far Rockaway, Queens, which is in Senator Malcolm Smith’s district, discussed how the Bottle Bill has helped members of his congregation make ends meet. “Not only the poor, but the working poor have turned to redemption to survive.”

### **Quotes from Organizations in Support of BBBB**

“The Bigger Better Bottle Bill will go a long way in reducing litter that threatens wildlife and defaces the Adirondacks, Catskills and other wild areas of New York State,” said Allison Beals, government relations director for the Adirondack Mountain Club. “People go to these natural areas to enjoy their scenic splendor, not to look at other people's trash.”

“Expanding the Bottle Bill makes good economic and environmental policy in these tough fiscal times,” said Sean Mahar, Director of Government Relations for Audubon New York. “We urge the Governor and the Legislature to come to an agreement on this important recycling and litter prevention measure and ensure the state reclaims the revenue from this proposal for critical projects throughout the state.”

“Updating New York's bottle bill will build on the documented success of the state's most effective recycling program. Expanding our current bottle deposit law to include bottled water and other drinks will also conserve energy and natural resources, reduce the waste going into landfills, and clean up our

communities. New Yorkers understand that the bottle bill works and that's why more than 80 percent want an update," said Saima Anjam, Environmental Advocates of New York.

Clearwater environmental director, Manna Jo Greene, notes, "The 'Bigger Better Bottle Bill' is a win-win for New Yorkers. The expansion will result in cleaner communities and a healthier environment for all New Yorkers. Revenue from the unclaimed deposits will help assure environmental funding at a time when the state is facing a significant revenue deficit. After so many years, its passage in 2009, should be a no-brainer."

"The Bigger Better Bottle Bill, if enacted, would not only help to protect our farmland and livestock from the epidemic of litter, it would also generate millions of dollars in much needed revenue for New York State -- a win-win situation, especially in the current down-trending economy," said Jeff Williams, Deputy Director of Public Policy for New York Farm Bureau.

"Updating New York's returnable beverage container law is long-overdue. Enacting the Bigger Better Bottle Bill means less litter in our state and local parks, in our waterways, and along our streets and roads," said Tim Sweeney, Director of the Campaign for Parks at Parks & Trails New York. "And, the unclaimed nickels that will be returned to the state will be a significant source of revenue at a time when New York is facing fiscal challenges of historic proportion. This is win-win legislation."

"The time has come for New York State to enact the Bigger Better Bottle Bill," said Scenic Hudson's Andy Bicking. "As the Hudson Valley celebrates its Quadricentennial year, we need clean water, safe waterfront parks and a much needed infusion of new revenue into the state's Environmental Protection Fund. An expanded Bottle Bill will help to meet these critical needs."

"Even in this difficult budget year, legislators and the governor have an opportunity to act together to create a new funding source for programs that keep New York's land, air and water clean and healthy," said Kathy Moser, Deputy State Director of The Nature Conservancy. "As lawmakers struggle this year to find revenue for critical programs, they should not pass up an opportunity like the bottle bill."

### **Majority of New Yorkers Support Updated Bottle Bill**

This measure has widespread support among the environmental community, civic groups, farmers, local governments, and recycling professionals primarily because of its environmental benefits. More than 700 groups, local governments, and businesses across New York, and more than 20 newspaper editorial boards, from *Buffalo News* to *El Diario*, have called on the State Legislature to update New York's Bottle Bill.

In addition, it is one of the few proposed revenue measures that enjoys broad public support. Three independent public opinion polls have found that more than 80% of New Yorkers support transferring the unclaimed deposits to the state to help fill the budget gap. The most recent surveys were conducted in November 2008 by The Nature Conservancy (82% support) and the Working Families Party (84% support).

*Please contact Bill Mahoney at NYPIRG, 518-436-0876 or mahoney.w@gmail.com for a copy of the New York State Beverage Marketing Data Analysis.*