

# Reasons to Oppose SB 1289 – Expanding the Bottle Bill<sup>1</sup>

SB 1289 would expand Connecticut's bottle bill to include noncarbonated, nonalcoholic beverage containers. Of the 11 deposit laws in the US, only three impose deposits on these products – the nearest such state is Maine. This bill would add significantly to consumer prices for beverages and other groceries, yet would yield disappointing environmental results.

## 1. Expanding the Scope of the Law. Estimated Cost: \$45 million/year

- Expansion would bring fundamental changes to the operation of the deposit law – raising costs for food stores, beverage distributors, and, ultimately, consumers.
- Food retailers must spend more on space, equipment, and staff for handling bottles
  - Greatest burden from containers that reverse vending machines (RVMs) can't handle
  - Sorting containers by hand means long lines for consumers and expense for retailers. Noncarbonated beverages sold in CT represent 265 different brands and materials.
- Water and juice companies must hire someone to handle their bottles and cans at a cost that is several times higher than for beer and soft drink containers.
- Expansion would add \$45 million in operating costs annually or a cost of more than \$5,000 per ton of material recycled. That compares to \$500 per ton for the current bottle bill and \$150 per ton for curbside recycling.

## 2. Raising the Handling Fee. Estimated Cost: \$10 million/year

- Beverage distributors are required by law to pay retailers and redemption centers a 2¢ handling fee for each soft drink container redeemed today and 1.5¢ for beer containers.
- The bill would increase that fee to 3¢, causing many more redemption centers to open (Maine's centers tripled when it increased its handling fee from 2¢ to 3¢).
- More centers means higher costs as volume per center drops, distributors must pick up at more locations, and fraud grows.

## 3. State Control of Unclaimed Deposits.

- The state would take unclaimed deposits from distributors of noncarbonated beverages. These funds are typically left with the distributor to offset the mandated expenses of handling fees and pickup from retailers.
- With high fraud levels (well in excess of 100% for many companies in Maine), few if any unclaimed deposits will be available for the state.

## 4. Minimal Benefit

- Noncarbonated beverage containers account for an average of 1.3% of litter. This bill ignores the rest.
- The additional recycling resulting from expansion would be about 1/3 of 1%.

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<sup>1</sup> Testimony of Kevin Dietly, Northbridge Environmental, Westford, MA; February 28, 2007