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Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter • Surfrider Foundation • The Nature Conservancy

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **GROUPS CHEER PASSAGE OF BIGGER BETTER BOTTLE BILL**

*Update of State's Bottle Recycling Law Hailed as Major Environmental Victory*

(Albany, NY) Groups from across the state applauded passage of the Bigger Better Bottle Bill today as part of the 2009-10 state budget. This momentous achievement is the first major overhaul of the state's bottle deposit law since it was created in 1982, and caps a grueling nine-year campaign to expand and update the law. The update expands New York's bottle return law to include water bottles, which comprise nearly a quarter of all beverages sold in New York. The law also requires beverage companies to return 80% of the unclaimed bottle and can deposits to the state, generating upwards of \$115 million annually for the General Fund.

"This is a huge victory not only for the environment, but for the people of New York," said Laura Haight, senior environmental associate with NYPIRG. "As a result of this law, we will have noticeably cleaner communities and far more recycling. At the same time, the money from the public's unclaimed nickels will go to work for us, not for Coke and Pepsi."

The groups praised Governor David Paterson for his leadership, fulfilling a promise he made to environmental groups at Earth Day Lobby Day last year; Speaker Sheldon Silver, Assemblyman Bob Sweeney and members of the Assembly for their steadfast support, having passed the bill every year since 2005; and Majority Leader Malcolm Smith, Senator Antoine Thompson and members of the Senate majority, without whose commitment the budget agreement would not have happened. The groups also acknowledged the efforts of former Assemblyman Thomas DiNapoli and Senator Kenneth LaValle, who introduced previous versions of the bill, and noted bipartisan support for the expansion that is not reflected in today's budget vote.

"Since the bottle bill was enacted nearly 30 years ago, the beverage industry has grown to include water drinks that have proliferated not simply on store shelves, but along the sides of our roads, wetlands, open spaces, and beaches," said Bob Sweeney (D-Lindenhurst), Chair of the Assembly Environmental Conservation Committee. "This budget will encourage recycling and help to clean our environment by updating New York's most successful recycling law to better represent today's consumers."

"The Bigger Better Bottle Bill is an issue close to my heart for good reason," said Senator Antoine Thompson (D-parts of Erie & Niagara Counties), Chair of the Senate's Environmental Conservation Committee. "The recycling of water bottles will significantly reduce litter throughout our communities and its accumulation in landfills. We are committed to creating green jobs for New Yorkers across the state that will both protect the

environment and revitalize our economy; and passage of this legislation will bring us a step closer to that realization.”

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE NEW LAW

The expansion, which goes into effect on June 1<sup>st</sup>, will require a deposit on all water bottles sold in New York. According to the Container Recycling Institute, more than 3.2 billion water bottles were sold in New York State alone – nearly a quarter of the state’s total beverage sales. Bottled water represents 70% of the total noncarbonated beverage sales in New York which previous versions of the bill sought to capture. Water bottles are one of the most common items found in litter cleanups in New York. Without a deposit, most of these containers end up in the trash or polluting our communities. Oregon and Connecticut have also recently expanded their deposit laws to include bottled water.

The law requires beverage companies to return 80% of the unclaimed deposits to the state General Fund, raising an estimated \$115 million next year. Since 1982, beer and soda companies have retained more than \$2 billion in unclaimed deposits. This legislation brings New York into line with other states, such as Massachusetts, Maine, Michigan, Hawaii, and most recently Connecticut, which already escheat unclaimed beverage container deposits.

The law also includes a number of measures that will improve opportunities for New Yorkers to return their empty bottles and cans, including incentives for small business and nonprofit redemption centers and requirements for large stores to maintain dedicated areas for bottle and can returns. These provisions, plus the expansion and an increased handling fee, will lead to the creation of thousands of new jobs across the state.

## QUOTES FROM GROUPS

"Updating New York's bottle deposit law has been one of the environmental community's top priorities since it was introduced," said Robert Moore, Executive Director of Environmental Advocates of New York. "The New York State Legislature and Governor Paterson are to be commended for their leadership in getting the Bigger Better Bottle Bill passed and improving on our most successful recycling program."

“The Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter applauds the Governor and Legislature for the historic expansion of the bottle recycling program,” said Susan Lawrence, Chapter Chair. “This action will protect our roads, beaches, and parks from water bottle litter, and helps municipalities save money from landfill expansions. Recycling these bottles will especially contribute to reducing energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. We extend our heartfelt thanks to the Governor and Legislature for this important victory.”

“Finally, we can say ‘Good Bye’ to the multitude of bottles polluting our parks, highways, beaches and communities. We won't miss them. We applaud the leadership of the Legislature and the Governor for getting the job done,” said Adrienne Esposito, Executive Director for Citizens Campaign for the Environment.

“We are greatly appreciative of the leadership displayed by the Governor and Legislature by approving an expanded bottle bill to help clean up our farm fields and expand recycling efforts,” said Dean Norton, President of New York Farm Bureau. "Farmers are prime stewards of our land and extending the bottle return statute to water bottles is a big win for environmental protection in New York State.”

“The passage of the bottle bill update is a victory that will create more green jobs across the state, reward the beverage retailer who embraces the most effective method of recycling and leave our planet a better place for future generations,” said Pete Sobol, legislative liaison for Empire State Beer Distributors Association. “We thank the Governor and all the legislators in Albany who made this happen.”

"Inclusion of the bottle bill in the budget means that our volunteers will find significantly less water bottles on New York's beaches," said Barbara Toborg of the American Littoral Society.

"The League of Women Voters of New York State joins our coalition partners in applauding Governor Paterson, Majority Leader Malcolm Smith and Speaker Sheldon Silver for expanding beverage recycling to include water bottles," said Barbara Bartoletti, Legislative Director. "This will remove water bottles from the waste stream and return nickels deposits for much needed state revenue."

"CRI is thrilled at this important victory in New York," said Elizabeth McLaughlin, executive director of the Container Recycling Institute. "Coming on the heels of Connecticut's decision to include water bottles, and Oregon's implementation of the same update, New York's decision will likely mean all bottle bill states will follow, since New York is such a big market. We congratulate the many, many supporters who worked tirelessly for this nationally significant win."

"The passage of the BBBB gives redemption centers across the state an opportunity to create hundreds of new jobs as existing redemption centers expand and new centers open," said Sheila Rivers, of the Bottle and Can Redemption Association (BACRA). "We thank our lawmakers for their achievement in passing this important legislation. The increase in the handling fee enables us to create a viable business model allowing us to provide for our families and our employees. The addition of water bottles into the deposit system offers us a growth opportunity as well as increasing fundraising opportunities for many worthy organizations."

"The Nature Conservancy thanks Legislators and the Governor working together to pass an expanded Bottle Bill, which will generate more than \$100 million in revenue for the state while enhancing the environment," said Kathy Moser, Deputy State Director for Conservation for The Nature Conservancy in New York. "We are especially thankful to Assemblyman Robert Sweeney and Senator Antoine Thompson for their leadership in seizing this opportunity to increase environmental protections in our New York."

"The restorations to the Environmental Protection Fund and passage of the Bigger Better Bottle Bill are big successes for New York's environment," said Marcia Bystryn, president of the New York League of Conservation Voters. "We applaud Gov. David Paterson, Speaker Sheldon Silver, Majority Leader Malcolm Smith, Assemblyman Robert Sweeney and Senator Antoine Thompson for their leadership and the importance they place on environmental progress, even in these difficult economic times."

"The expanded bottle bill legislation provides a critical addition to New York's recycling laws as well as a needed economic asset for the state budget," said Richard Schrader, the New York Legislative Director for the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Andy Bicking, Director of Public Policy for Scenic Hudson stated, "The expansion of the bottle bill is a victory for all New Yorkers. It will reduce litter in our public parks and on our waterfronts, helping them to stay safe and attractive destinations that attract appropriate economic development. Governor Paterson, Majority Leader Smith and Speaker Silver deserve a hearty round of congratulations from the Hudson Valley's environmental community."

"The Governor and the Legislature see the importance of this expanded bottle bill, both as an anti-litter and recycling initiative and as an important source of revenue at a time when it is so urgently needed," noted Manna Jo Greene of the Hudson River Sloop Clearwater.

"The Surfrider Foundation looks forward to cleaner beaches as a result of the improved bottle bill in NY. Thank you to the legislators who championed this cause and the ones who compromised to allow this," said Steff Zellinger, volunteer with the New York City Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation.

“We are here today because of the leadership demonstrated by all three leaders and their commitment to the small business community. We applaud you and look forward to continuing our work to ensure that small business has a seat at the table,” said Carlos Nazario, President and Chairman of Promesa.

“The North Shore Land Alliance would like to thank all of our elected officials who voted to expand the Bigger Better Bottle Bill,” said President Lisa W. Ott. “As stewards of our local lands we are particularly grateful for legislation that will result in cleaner waterways and reduce litter in our parks and preserves while bringing new revenue to the State. Bravo!”

“Expanding the Bottle Bill has always made good economic and environmental sense, and we are thrilled that the legislature has finally agreed with us,” said Albert E. Caccese, Executive Director of Audubon New York. “Audubon New York applauds the Legislature, especially Assemblyman Robert Sweeney and Senator Antoine Thompson, for developing this important compromise on the Bigger, Better Bottle Bill, and for protecting the integrity of the EPF.”

"In challenging economic times, New York State's commitment to modernizing the Bottle Bill is smart and commendable. Land Trust Alliance and the communities served by New York's 90 land trusts applaud Governor Paterson and the Legislature for this historic achievement, which will help create jobs, protect our natural heritage, conserve resources, and generate much needed revenue for the State of New York," said Land Trust Alliance's New York Conservation Manager, Ethan Winter.

“Our thanks go out to the Legislature and Governor for pushing through the expansion of the Bottle Bill,” said David Haight, New York Director for the American Farmland Trust. “Farmers have long supported the Bottle Bill and its expansion as a way to keep litter out of farm fields and support a healthy environment in New York.”

“The long-awaited expansion of New York’s bottle bill will mean less litter in our state and local parks, in our waterways and along our highways, and it will provide significant revenue for the state,” said Tim Sweeney of Parks & Trails New York. “Governor Paterson and the Legislature should be commended for putting New York’s environment first.”

More than 700 nonprofit groups, small businesses, and local governments have called for updating the Bottle Law since the campaign was launched in 2000. Tens of thousands of citizens have called, written letters, sent e-mails, signed petitions, and met with their state legislators urging their support. Three independent polls have shown that more than 80% of registered voters in New York support expanding the Bottle Law and recapturing the unclaimed deposits. But for years the legislation stalled in Albany due to powerful special interest lobbyists from the beverage and retail industry. Opponents of the bottle bill expansion gave more than \$2 million in campaign contributions to state legislators over the past two years.

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