



NEWS RELEASE

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NYPIRG Surveys Highlight Bottle Bill Benefits to Businesses; *Expanding the Program Could Yield Even Bigger Returns*

The New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) released two surveys today that indicate that the recent updates to New York's "Bottle Bill" have had a positive impact on retailers and redemption centers in New York State. NYPIRG will be presenting the findings at a hearing today before a joint New York State Legislative Committee on the proposed 2013-14 state budget on environmental conservation.

In a survey of over 1100 people interviewed while returning bottles and cans at supermarkets, **"Shop Where You Drop: A Survey of Consumer Bottle Return Habits,"** NYPIRG found that most were also shopping at the store (68%). Of these, most said they shopped there frequently (81%), and more than half said that they had chosen that store in whole or in part because of the convenience of its bottle return facilities (57%). These findings suggest that retailers who offer convenient bottle return facilities may be benefiting from New York's Bottle Bill by attracting more customers, in addition to the handling fee they get for each container they take back.

In a separate survey of bottle and can redemption centers in New York State, **"More Bottles, More Jobs,"** NYPIRG found that the 2009 amendments to the Bottle Bill fostered business expansion and job creation within this sector. In 2009, the Bottle Bill was expanded to include bottled water, and the handling fee paid to retailers and redemption centers was increased from 2 cents per container to 3.5 cents. Most of the redemption centers surveyed reported that the number of beverage containers redeemed at their facilities had increased significantly and that the changes had had a positive impact on their businesses. A third of the redemption centers surveyed said they had opened after the new law's enactment, and more than half said they had expanded as a result of the new law. Many had opened up new storefronts, hired additional workers, and increased employee wages and benefits.

A previous survey conducted by NYPIRG in 2010 found that three months after the expanded Bottle Bill went into effect, most retailers surveyed were in full compliance with the new labeling and redemption requirements for bottled water.

“The results of these surveys clearly show that the expansion to bottled water in 2009 went smoothly, and that a further expansion of the Bottle Bill would not only help the environment, but help businesses across the state grow and create new jobs,” said Laura Haight, NYPIRG’s senior environmental associate. “We urge the Governor and the Legislature to consider the many benefits of expanding the Bottle Bill to include the other convenience beverages such as iced tea, sports drinks, and sugared waters.”

The **Shop Where You Drop** survey also found that most people returning empty containers were combining the trip with shopping and other errands (80%) or traveling by foot, bike or public transportation (11%), debunking an industry myth that bottle bills result in increased greenhouse gas emissions from people driving to the store just to return their bottles. Of the remaining 9%, most of the people who drove to the store just to return their empties were bringing back large quantities of bottles and cans (more than 72 containers). A mere 3.5% of all respondents indicated that they had used an automobile exclusively to return fewer than 72 containers.

Bottle Bill Reforms on the Table in State Budget Proposal

Governor Cuomo’s proposed budget makes a number of changes to the Bottle Bill. Most significantly, the budget proposal would transfer \$15 million of the annual unclaimed bottle deposit receipts and an additional \$4 million from “increased and improved enforcement” of the program into the State’s Environmental Protection Fund.

In testimony presented to the State Legislature today, Haight noted that “The Bottle Bill is first and foremost an environmental measure. The Bottle Bill continues to be New York’s most effective recycling and litter prevention program, but it could be even better. While this proposal offers a welcome addition of funding for the EPF, a truly “cleaner, greener New York” would maximize the environmental benefits of the Bottle Bill.”

In addition to calling for an expansion of the program, NYPIRG recommended more aggressive enforcement of the law, stronger reporting requirements, and adding incentives for refillable containers. NYPIRG also urged the state to consider measures to improve return rates, such as increasing the container deposit.

NYPIRG urged the Legislature not to make any changes to the Bottle Bill that would make it harder for people to redeem bottles and cans. “The whole point of the program is to encourage recycling,” Haight said.

The surveys will be posted online at www.nypirg.org.

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