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June 13, 2003

**CONTACTS:**Jennifer Gitlitz, CRI Research Director (413) 684-4746  
Andrew Schuyler, Aide to Senator Nuciforo (413) 442-6810**Bottle Bill  
Toolkit****Example:  
Press  
Release****Sen. Nuciforo Introduces Bill to Update Massachusetts Bottle Bill**

Measure would put deposits on “non-bubbly” beverages and would generate \$5.7 million in new revenues for the Commonwealth

(June 13, 2003)—Twenty state legislators have joined Sen. Andrea F. Nuciforo, Jr. (D-Pittsfield) in an effort to update the Commonwealth’s 20-year old container deposit law, or “bottle bill.” Nuciforo’s bill would expand the law to include nearly 700 million non-carbonated beverage containers that are currently exempt from the 5¢ deposit. These include iced tea, sports drinks, fruit juices, and bottled water. It would also place a 15¢ deposit on wine and liquor bottles.

According to the Container Recycling Institute (CRI), non-carbonated drinks are packaged primarily in glass and plastic bottles, which are bulky and costly for municipalities to collect through curbside recycling programs, and they bring in little revenue.

“Right now, taxpayers are footing the bill to deal with these non-carbonated containers—whether through curbside collection or litter clean-up,” said Sen. Nuciforo. “Including them in the Commonwealth’s bottle bill makes good fiscal and environmental sense.”

Massachusetts’s lawmakers are particularly interested in the bill’s budgetary implications. Under the existing law, about \$35 million in “unclaimed deposits” (from the 33% of containers that are not redeemed) are currently funneled into the state’s Clean Environment Fund each year. If passed, the expanded bottle bill will generate an estimated \$5.7 million a year in additional revenue for the Commonwealth, for a total of about \$41 million annually.

“The Governor is committed to bringing our bottle bill up to date by including more containers,” said Ellen Roy Herzfelder, Secretary of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs. “Money from unredeemed deposits is crucial to help fund recycling programs throughout the state.”

According to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, 27 billion bottles and cans have been recycled through the deposit law since 1983, generating over \$225 million in revenues for the Commonwealth. Some of this money has been used to fund recycling and other environmental programs, and some has been used to write down the state’s deficit.

While virtually non-existent in 1983 when the law was enacted, non-carbonated beverages now account for about 25% of the total beverage market in Massachusetts. According to CRI’s Jennifer Gitlitz, who helped craft the bill, “Many of these beverages are sold in single-serve containers and are consumed away from home, so they are less likely to end up in a curbside bin and more likely to be littered.”

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*(Bottle Bill Update, continued)*

Recent data confirms this. A random sample of trash collected by volunteers at an April 12<sup>th</sup> cleanup of the Charles River in Boston contained 431 non-returnable beverage containers and only 96 returnable (deposit) containers—a ratio of 4.5 to 1. According to Russ Cohen of Mass Riverways, who helped organize the clean-up, similar results have been found throughout the state. “Since there are currently at least three deposit containers sold for every one non-deposit container sold in Massachusetts,” Cohen said, “it is over twelve times more likely that a non-deposit container will end up littering our waterways than will a deposit container.”

“The bottle bill is popular with consumers and it keeps our cities and parks clean,” said Sen. Jarrett Barrios (D-Cambridge), a co-sponsor of the legislation. “Improving it by adding non-bubbly beverages to the deposit system is sound public policy.”

Sen. Cynthia Creem (D-Newton) agreed. “All bottles and cans should have the same recycling incentives,” she said.

The bottle bill has had other environmental benefits as well, said CRI’s Gitlitz, including reduced trash sent to the state’s landfills and incinerators, reduced pollution, and energy savings. “In 2002 alone, the 104,000 tons of bottles and cans recycled through the bottle bill saved the energy equivalent of 540,000 barrels of crude oil, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions by about 80,000 tons. The expansion would increase these benefits by about 15%.”

“It’s high time to update the bottle bill,” said Iris Vincencio-Garaygay, Environmental Advocate for the Massachusetts Public Interest Research Group (MassPIRG). “MassPIRG has mounted numerous campaigns to expand the deposit law, but has been outgunned by the beverage and retail industry lobbies time and again. We are optimistic that with the Governor’s support, we can bring the bottle bill up to date this time.”

Other proposed changes to the Massachusetts beverage container deposit law include raising the handling fee that redemption centers and retailers receive as compensation for their efforts to accept and process the returned containers, and reimbursing beer and soft drink distributors 0.4¢ per container redeemed to help defray their transportation and processing costs.

Sen. Nuciforo is hopeful that the Joint Energy Committee will report the bill out of committee so that legislators have an opportunity to vote for the measure. The bill could be heard on June 24<sup>th</sup> along with other recycling-related bills, including a deposit repeal bill sponsored by Sen. Colleen Garry (D-Dracut).

Sen. Susan Fargo (D-Lincoln), who has fought numerous attempts to repeal the bottle bill, said the expansion bill promotes corporate responsibility. “I have worked to get the non-redeemable brands into the bottle bill for years,” she said. “It’s an issue of fairness.”

If the expansion bill is approved by the legislature and signed by the governor, Massachusetts would become the fourth state with an expanded bottle bill. Maine, California, and Hawaii already require deposits on non-carbonated beverages. Activists and policymakers in New York, Connecticut, Oregon and Michigan are pursuing similar updates.

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*The Container Recycling Institute is a national non-profit organization that studies and promotes policies to encourage beverage container recycling.*