



CGA ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING

Friday, March 6, 2020

Testimony Submitted by Kathy Golas, Bottle Bill Specialist

HB 5340, An Act Concerning Modernization of the Connecticut Bottle Redemption Program (SUPPORT)

For 50 years, the League of Women Voters has supported policies promoting recycling, including advocating for Connecticut’s beverage container redemption law, commonly known as the “Bottle Bill.”

This legislation has proven highly effective in increasing the recycling of high-quality material, reducing litter in streets, beaches and parks and saving taxpayers money. However, now it is essential to expand and modernize the law, as soon as possible to meet today’s challenges.

• **WE ARE IN A RECYCLING CRISIS.** HB 5340 is one important tool for effectively addressing our current recycling crisis. The cost of recycling mixed materials from the blue recycling bin has skyrocketed. Connecticut taxpayers now pay, or may soon pay, as much as \$98 per ton to process blue bin recyclables. **Not long ago, many municipalities were receiving a credit for recyclables. Now, processing these recyclables is a significant expense.** For example, in FY 18-19, New Britain residents generated 4300 tons of recyclables. Currently, New Britain taxpayers pay about \$85 per ton for recyclables, or about \$365,500 per year.

Glass from the blue bin is not being recycled. Expanding the bottle deposit law to include non-carbonated beverages, wine, and liquor would provide taxpayer cost savings by diverting millions of additional beverage containers. *About 75% of the weight of those containers is glass.* Diverting as much glass as possible from the recycling bin is good for recycling.

• **IT’S TIME TO INCREASE THE REFUNDABLE DEPOSIT FROM 5¢ TO 10¢. (Section 2)** This is not a tax or a fee. Consumers get the 10¢ back when they redeem containers. Connecticut’s current redemption rate stands at about 50%. A 10¢ deposit provides a greater financial incentive to redeem containers instead of littering or putting them in the trash or the recycling bin. **Redeeming beverage containers is more effective than curbside recycling. It provides a cleaner material for existing adequate markets.** It makes little sense to place these items in the blue. An average of 16% are so contaminated they cannot be recycled. Additionally, about 30-50% of beverage containers are consumed outside the home, where the blue bin isn’t an option. We recommend making Section 2 effective on January 1, 2021.

• **SAVE JOBS AND ADD JOBS BY INCREASING THE HANDLING FEE. (Section 3)** Increasing the handling fee paid by the distributors to retailers and redemption centers will **preserve over 500 jobs and create of new jobs.** The handling fee has not been increased since 1986. **Many redemption centers have closed, leaving only seven functioning centers.** In 2009, after the handling fee increased to 3.5 cents in New York, over 100 new redemption centers opened. **In a like manner, Connecticut can expect as many as 18 new redemption centers which will add jobs and make redeeming containers more convenient for consumers.** We recommend making Section 3 effective on July 1, 2020.

• **DISCARDED RECYCLABLES, ESPECIALLY PLASTIC, ARE A POLLUTION SOURCE.** According to the Connecticut River Conservancy, beverage containers were the most common littered item found in the Connecticut River watershed in 2019. The bottle deposit law reduces recyclable material that is discarded on the land or in the water.

Most importantly, Connecticut voters support expanding the bottle deposit law to include all recyclable containers. A January 2020 poll by GQR, a national polling organization, showed 81% support for expansion.

The League of Women Voters of CT urges the members of the Environment Committee to vote **“yes” on HB 5340.**

The League of Women Voters of Connecticut is a non-partisan statewide organization consisting of about 1600 women and men in 26 local chapters that are committed to effective public policy and informed participation of citizens in government.