



Testimony submitted by the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts

To the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy  
In Support of H.3848

An Act updating the bottle bill

Submitted by Anne Borg

LWVMA Co-President

March 6, 2014

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts (LWVMA) strongly supports H.3848, an initiative petition updating the original “Bottle Bill” by expanding the deposit on glass, plastic and metal containers to include non-alcoholic, non-carbonated drinks, such as water, juice, iced tea and sports drinks, which represent one third of the over 3 billion beverage containers sold annually in Massachusetts.

The League urges passage of this bill, and our members gathered over 20,000 signatures during the petition drive last fall.

**1. Deposits work to reduce litter and increase recycling.** About 70% of beverage containers currently covered by the bottle bill are redeemed and 10% are recycled. Only 23% of non-deposit containers are recycled.

**2. Municipalities will save money.** Removing these containers from trash collection, disposal and storm drain cleaning will save cities and towns an estimated \$6 million annually.

**3. Pollution of air and water will decrease.** Incineration of plastic bottles introduces dioxins and other synthetic chemicals into our environment.

**4. The update will create jobs.** Every state that has updated its deposit system has gained jobs, many in the recycling sector, which produces important and sustainable raw materials needed in manufacturing. Products are being developed using recycled water bottles, including textiles such as Polartec®, produced in Lawrence, MA.

**5. Fossil fuel resources will be conserved.** Plastic containers are made of PET (polyethylene terephthalate), which is 99% petroleum.

**6. There is widespread support for passage.** Over 350 small businesses, over 208 Massachusetts cities and towns, over 90 local and statewide environment, sustainability and public policy advocacy organizations and over 70% of individual voters support expanding the deposit system.

None of these facts are new. All have been reported over many legislative sessions. The multiple environmental and fiscal benefits incorporated in this legislation have maintained well-documented and broad-based support for over a decade, in spite of well-financed and aggressive efforts by its opponents. And in spite of this support, it has failed to come before the legislature for a vote.

Therefore, in the interest of the majority of Massachusetts citizens and municipalities strongly favoring the expansion of the current deposit system, LWVMA is pursuing a campaign to place the Updated Bottle Bill on the November 2014 ballot. However, we continue to prefer that the Updated Bottle Bill become law through the traditional legislative process, and we optimistically look forward to this Committee reporting this bill, the result of a major signature-gathering campaign, to the legislature with a favorable recommendation.

Thank you for your consideration.