

Legislative Action Day
A Youth Workshop for Advocacy

**When the rights of one are denied,
the rights of all are in jeopardy
— Jo Ann Roach**

January 2008

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Legislative Action Day

A Youth Workshop for Advocacy

I. Introduction:

Legislative Action Day (LAD) was started in 2003 by Promise the Children as a workshop to teach and inspire youth to become involved in the democratic process, learn to express their beliefs and passions, and to give them hope that they can shape public policy, legislation and the effective use of taxes. As citizens, youth must learn to participate in democracy by campaigning, voting, and communicating with their legislators. These skills are key to good citizenship in a democracy. It is vital that we educate our youth to work for change and become "citizen activists". To do this they must fully understand the process.

Civics and citizen participation courses have been abandoned by our public schools. This workshop teaches skills that, once learned, will not be forgotten and hopefully will be utilized for a lifetime. The need for these skills is particularly important in today's society where it is all too easy to disengage and not speak up for personal beliefs. In the UU tradition, LAD focuses on social justice and activism in an atmosphere that is both inspiring and fun. Promise the Children has developed this workshop which brings youth to the city of Boston for the day and actively engages them with lawmakers.

This guide is intended to help bring this workshop to youth in every state in the nation through the creative talents of UU Religious Educators. While this goal is ambitious, it is attainable. Our hope is that UU educators will embrace this workshop and actively work to teach these skills in a way that will make it second nature for our youth to use their voices for change. It is their right ... and our duty to give them the tools to do so.

II. Preparation:

1. Important information about the workshop

- The workshop runs 8:30 – 4:00
- The target age for the workshop is Grades 7-12
- The suggested fee is \$10
- Plan to have two issues; one "hot-button" issue and one latent issue
- You will need a meeting place for the day *with insurance* that is within walking distance to your State House

- Plan to serve a continental breakfast, a simple lunch, and finish with ice cream sundaes
- Plan on 1 adult (this could also be a young adult) per 8 youths and 1 facilitator for each 25 youths
- Contact Information: meryl@promisethechildreनुु.org

2. Handouts

These are very important as they will outline the issues and the facts that pertain to those issues. Handouts will also identify:

- The legislators from each district and who (lawmaker or aide) will be visited as well as appointment times
- Each legislator's position on each issue (i.e. level of support)
- Who will report to which legislative district group for brainstorming according to where they live and worship
- A short guide for adult facilitators (sample provided at end of packet)

Remember that for many of the youth this will be the first time that they will actively engage a legislator. Clarifying actions at the start will make for an easier transition as they formulate their position.

III. Notes for Facilitators

The goal of this workshop is to help **youth** develop the skills to lobby for change. Perhaps the most critical skill is being able to speak clearly about issues that they are passionate about. As a facilitator, your job includes creating a space where youth are supported in speaking to the group and eventually, face to face with their legislators. In a case of "stage fright", be prepared to ask questions that will prompt the youth to continue with their presentation and interaction.

There are programs that very effectively encourage intergenerational participation. However, it is our experience with this workshop that adults sometimes hinder the participation of youth. Guest adults (including parents, volunteers, etc.) can sometimes be overwhelming in their passion for issues presented and need to be aware that when they take the lead in these settings, youth may be hesitant about participating. Make it clear to youth that they are expected to do the talking with the legislators.

We have found it best to mix the adults in with the youth in the initial circle and then break up with them into small groups (one adult per 8 youths). It is in these groups that the adult will **lead** the discussion but not dominate it. Remember, it is important to instill a comfort level during this phase so that the youths can articulate their position when they approach their legislator.

1. Organization Note

Prior to the day, you will have to schedule appointments with each represented district's legislators. Optimally, a representative and a senator are preferred. Usually, and aide will be available if the actual legislators are not. These appointments are often made at the last minute. Try to pre-arrange as much as possible but don't get discouraged if you are arranging on the day of the event. Such is business at the State House.

You should also want to consider having an "expert" visitor to brief the audience on the issue at hand. This not only lends legitimacy to the subject matter, but also will allow you to have the issue presented by a highly qualified official.

2. General Timeline:

8:00-8:30 – Welcome and breakfast

8:30-9:00 – Chalice lighting, outline of the day, and ice-breaker

9:00-9:30 - Introduction of issues

9:30-10:30 – Small group discussion of issues and presentation skills (youths will be placed in groups according to their legislators)

10:30-11:15 - Role play

11:15-12:15-Lunch

12:30 - Walk to State House

1:00-2:30 – Meetings with legislators

2:30 – Return to meeting place

3:00 – 4:00 – Ice cream sundaes and wrap-up including writing thank you notes

IV. Leading the Workshop

Step 1. Materials:

Bring with you to the workshop all of the following materials:

- This guide
- Nametag stickers
- Colorful markers and pens for each participant
- A large pad of paper, or a portable board on which you can write
- Chalice candle and matches
- Reading for chalice lighting
- Note cards for thank you notes to legislators
- Advocacy packet in a folder for each participant that includes fact sheets, issues outlined and legislator information (sample packet at the end of this guide)

Step 2: Welcome and Breakfast:

This is a settling in time. Make sure that the participants sign in with full information including email and church. Check that you have the necessary paperwork for each of them including permission and release forms. Direct them to get a bagel and grab a seat in the open circle. This is a time for them to chat and get settled.

Step 3: Nametags

Ask students to make nametags as they are entering the space where you will be leading the workshop. Put a small twist on nametags by asking youth to identify their district and parish. Having everyone wear nametags helps to identify youth and call them by their names during the workshop.

Step 4: Post an Agenda

On a blackboard or on an easel pad, list each step of the workshop. For example:

Introductions

Check-In

Ice Breaker... (etc.)

Step 5: Introductions

Set up the group in a circle. If you have several facilitators, scatter yourselves around the circle, so that you can interact more easily with the group. (When all the facilitators stand at the front, it tends to create a classroom feel which is too formal.)

Introduce yourself at the start of the workshop. Give your name and say a few sentences about your organization (if you are an outside facilitator) and about the workshop. Also note the purpose and goal of the workshop and the skills that the participants will be taught during the course of the day. At this time, one facilitator should also run through the agenda. It is not necessary to explain every item in detail. Instead, you might say "I know I like to have an idea of what is coming up when I am participating in a workshop, so I posted our agenda here. We're starting with introductions, and in a minute we are going to check-in. After that, we'll do an icebreaker..."

Step 6: Check-In

Ask each student and facilitator to share their name and the answer to a particular question. We ask students to share something related to the topic of the workshop (i.e. current issues). For example, if you want to connect check-in with the nametags, the question could be, "Mary, what current issue do you feel passionate about?"

Step 7: Chalice Lighting

In keeping with the UU tradition, we recommend beginning the program with the traditional chalice lighting. The chalice lighting is important for several reasons. First, it gives participants a moment to center themselves. Second, a reading about advocacy and social justice can help participants focus on the topic at hand. Third, it emphasizes that this workshop is taking place in a religious context; it is about our beliefs and commitments, as well as the skills needed to act on these beliefs.

For suggestions please check out the following websites or use your own.

<http://www.uua.org/spirituallife/worshipweb/openings/categories/4097.shtml>

UUA's Worship Web

Step 8: Ice-breaker

An icebreaker is any activity that gets participants working together in a fun, non-threatening way. Icebreakers are especially important with groups in which the youth do not know each well (such as when youth groups from different congregations meet together), or when a single youth group does not meet frequently. This is also an ideal project for a young adult facilitator.

An icebreaker that we use is titled, "The Wind Blows." It is similar to musical chairs. At the start of the game, participants should be seated in chairs, in a circle, except for one participant who is standing in the center of the circle. There should only be enough chairs in the circle for everyone who is seated. The participant in the center of the circle completes the phrase "The wind blows for everyone who _____." The speaker should fill in this phrase with something that is true for them.

For example, if the person in the center of the circle wears glasses, she might say "the wind blows for everyone who wears glasses." At this point, everyone seated in the circle who wears glasses gets out of their chairs, and, along with the person who made the statement, rushes to fill another open seat. This open seat cannot be one right next to their former seat. Since there is one less chair than the number of people playing, someone will be left without a chair. This person then becomes the person who stands in the center of the circle.¹

Deep Fun (<http://www25.uua.org/YRUU/resources/online/deepfun.html>) also lists a number of ice breakers that can be used with UU youth.

¹ A detailed description of the Wind Blows, along with suggested variations, can be found in: Stanley Pollock, with Mary Fusoni, *Moving Beyond Icebreakers: An Innovative Approach to Group Facilitation, Learning and Action* (Boston, MA: The Center for Teen Empowerment, Inc., 2005), pgs. 377-380.

Step 9: Introduction of Issues

At this time, distribute the handouts and take about ten minutes to introduce the **two** (you may also select and focus on one) pre-selected issues that have been chosen to address. Try to adhere to the following guidelines when selecting your issues:

- One should be a “hot-button” issue (i.e. gay marriage)
- One should be an ongoing struggle issue (i.e. school assessment testing)
- Keep the issues relevant to the ages of the participants

Introduce each issue stating both the pros and cons. If you have brought in an expert on the issue, now is the time to have him or her present their issue. Encourage a brief discussion taking comments from the circle. Ask questions and entice answers as to why these issues are important and why they were chosen for focus. We suggest that you use an easel pad to visually outline the comments from the youth. Doing so has two advantages: everyone feels heard and valued, and it helps to organize the information, especially for visual learners.

Step 10: Small Group Discussions

Break up into small groups based on legislative districts. The handouts will tell the youth which district they belong to based on town and, sometimes, place of worship. This is when the youth will discuss the selected issues and formulate a strategy for making a presentation to their legislators. In the past, some groups have chosen to present both issues and have managed to do so very effectively. In guiding this session, adults should feel out the participants and make a judgment as to whether they would be more effective focusing and presenting one issue. Keep the youth on task and guide their discussion toward the following end:

- A pointed list outlining the facts of the legislation and why the group either does or does not support it
- A chosen lead speaker who will present the opinions of the group
- A plan for all youth to make a statement at the end of the presentation

Remind them that they are meeting with legislators to present their opinions as constituents of this lawmaker. It is this legislator’s role to speak collectively for those he/she represents. What they are doing is **lobbying for their cause**. This is important terminology for them to use throughout the day.

Important side lesson!

Etiquette: extend your hand, look into the eyes of the person you are addressing and introduce yourself stating your name and your town.

Step 11: Role Play

This is a vitally important for the comfort level of the participants. It will give them a sense of what to expect when they walk into the office of a legislator. Walking into the office of an elected official can be intimidating, but the adults involved can put the youth at ease by reminding them that these lawmakers **want** to hear from them. The opinions of constituents are vitally important for democracy to succeed. In addition, remind the youth that lawmakers are everyday citizens and constituents themselves. It is important to keep the youth aware that they are stating their opinions and that is their right.

Facilitators at this point should act out the role of the legislator from start to finish. "Open the door" and welcome the group into your office. Properly introduce yourself as "Representative Jones" and set the example of the proper etiquette to each youth. Take your seat and encourage them to present their case. It is important to ask questions such as:

- "Why did you come here today?"
- "What are your concerns with this legislation?"
- "Can you tell me more about why you feel I should examine/change my position?"
- "What about the financial/time/ethical implications. How do you suggest I address these concerns?"

These questions are not meant to "trip up" the youth but rather are meant to better prepare them for the in-depth considerations that lawmakers need to be aware of when speaking with constituents.

Following the conversation, thank each youth individually and have them leave the office. Take this time to reassess the role play and neaten up any loose ends prior to heading out to your meeting.

Step 12: Walk to the State House

The youth and their leaders should walk as a group to the State House. Plan accordingly for time so that your appointments will be accommodated in a timely manner. Generally, you can count on about 20 minutes per legislative visit. You should plan on a meet-up place following the visits such as a facility Café. These are usually available for public use and are a good place to meet and wait to regroup. Keep in mind that the visits will not all take place within the same time frame. Some visits will take place immediately and others will have a schedule delay. Take this opportunity to have discussions regarding legislative process and the reasons that the youth are involved. Bring along some note cards and use extra time to write thank you cards to the visited legislator and staff. When everyone has regrouped following visits, you can return to your main meeting place for further discussion and wrap-up.

Step 13: Wrap-up

Ice cream sundaes seem to be an appropriate and enjoyable way to wrap up the day. When the youth return to the main meeting place, have the sundae bar set up so that they can get their treat and find a place in the circle. Have each participant give a brief statement about their visit reflecting on the experience. Adults may have to guide them in their reflection but this is a good exercise in analyzing the impact that they may have had on the legislators.

Following reflection, thank them for their participation and emphasize the impact that their voices have on the legislative process. Make sure at this time that the thank you cards have all been completed for each legislator visited. Collect the cards from the participants, extinguish the chalice, and the day is complete!

V. Your Feedback

This guide to the Legislative Action Day is a work in progress. Thanks to the ease of publishing and distributing materials on the internet, we have the capacity to make updates and changes over time. Please do contact us to share your questions and suggestions about this guide and particularly your experiences with this workshop.

The contact person for this project is Meryl Baier, National Organizer for Promise the Children. You can contact her at: meryl@promisethechildreनुु.org.

Tips for Adult Facilitators

The goal of this workshop is to help **youth** develop the skills to lobby for change. Perhaps the most critical skill for them is being able to speak clearly about issues that they are passionate about. As a facilitator, your job is to:

- Create a space where youth are supported in speaking to the group and eventually, face to face with their legislators
- Make it clear that the **youth** are expected to do the talking with the legislators.
- Lead the role play and give constructive feedback while instilling confidence
- Be the stage manager/director and in a case of “stage fright”, be prepared to ask questions that will prompt the youth to continue with their presentation and interaction.

Hints for inspiring youth

Your other role as facilitator is to instill confidence in your group. Remind them of the earlier study issues that you as a group addressed and the importance that their viewpoint is represented to their officials. Remember these hints:

- Role play is important to achieve a comfort level
- Continue to practice until you are confident that the youth will reach this goal
- Use correct terminology such as “lobby, legislator, legislation, and constituent
- Remind them that elected officials are eager to hear their viewpoint
- Elected officials are regular people and representing constituents is their job
- Allow everyone to have a voice and encourage them to use it

Have a fabulous Lobby Day!!

Sample “Thank You Note” to Legislator or Staff

(handwritten notes are considered most effective)

Dear _____,

Thank you so much for meeting with us last Tuesday. As youth constituents, we appreciate getting to know you, your positions on the issues, and your responsiveness to our concerns.

The Health Education Bill would assure that health education is provided to all public school students in the Commonwealth as part of the core curriculum in grades K -12. We support age appropriate access to this information in a classroom setting which would include physical well-being, mental health, substance abuse, sexuality, and healthy family and social relationships.

The update on the Bottle Bill would insure that **all** bottled beverages, carbonated and no-carbonated, would be eligible for redemption. This would not only increase recycling and decrease the waste in landfills, but it would also gain a projected \$1.5 million in revenue for the State through bottles recycled but not redeemed. It is both environmentally and fiscally responsible to update this Bill.

Again, thank you so much for meeting with us and we look forward to a long-term relationship with you (and with Senator _____ or Representative _____ if you met with an aide)

Sincerely,

(the names of all those who visited with your town following your name)

Meeting with your Legislators: Cheat Sheet

Two key Bills and talking points

Update the Bottle Bill

H. 3365 - An Act to Improve Recycling Rates in the Commonwealth

Summary: An Updated Bottle Bill would expand our container deposit system to include “new age” drinks such as non-carbonated beverages, water, iced tea, juice, and sports drinks.

Why it is Important:

- It would **add approximately \$15 million to state revenue** via projected unclaimed deposits
- It would **decrease litter**
- It would **increase recycling**

The Health Education Bill

H. 597, S. 288 - An Act to Provide Health Education in the Schools

- **Summary:** This bill would make comprehensive health education part of the core curriculum for Massachusetts public schools. School districts would be required to teach age-appropriate, medically accurate health education in grades K-12.

Why it is Important:

- The information in the Health Education frameworks **Saves Lives!**
- It would offer all students the same health education curriculum regardless of geography or financial capability
- It would afford students the opportunity to learn about a wide range of important topics including nutrition, physical activity, mental health, substance abuse, sexuality and reproduction, and violence prevention

Meeting with Your Legislators

Visiting your legislators is the most effective way to make an impression!

Here are some tips for making your meeting a success:

Identify yourself and the organization you work with (Promise the Children, UU church)

If meeting at the Statehouse, know that you may be interrupted by roll call votes or other pressing business that may pull the legislator away. If you are meeting with the legislator and a staff person, the staff person will probably stay with you if the legislator is called away.

Keep your discussion of the issue brief and to the point.

Have at least two copies of any material you want to share with the legislator (one to give to him or her and one for you to use as reference as you talk). Offer to leave them if he or she wants them. Don't weight down your package of material with trivial items. Stick to a one page fact sheet, letters of support from other constituents, and newspaper articles or editorials in support of your position.

If you are aware of other lengthy statistical or data-based material that supports your position, offer to share them if your legislator wants copies.

Personalize the issue. Tell your legislator why this issue is important to you, your family, friends and community. Share any expertise or experience you have.

Don't be dismissive of staff members. If the legislator is unavailable to meet with you but a staff person who handles the issue can meet instead, go for it. The staff person is often the one with the most knowledge on an issue and usually welcomes the input of constituents on the issues. Staff members often make recommendations to the legislator. Winning over the staff member is one of the best ways to win over the elected official.

Don't burn bridges or argue. If he or she is not swayed by your presentation and disagrees with you, don't get hostile. Just because your legislator was against you on this issue, doesn't mean he or she will always be. Let him or her know you appreciate his or her time and consideration of your viewpoint.

Thank the legislator and/or staff person for their time and let them know you will follow through with any promised material at a later date.

After Your Meeting: Write a thank-you note. Even if your legislator has disagreed with you or was non-committal, he or she at least took the time to listen to you. Thank him or her (and the staff person) with a handwritten thank you note.

Legislative Action Day 2008

Make a REAL difference in the



Sponsored by Promise the Children and UUSC

"Be the change you want to see in the world"
-Mahatma Gandhi

Welcome!

Thanks for being here for the 2008 Legislative Action Day!

It is our hope that you will learn some helpful lobby skills and have a new found confidence in using your voice elected officials. All of you have been assigned meetings with either your legislator or one of their aides. Don't discount the aides...they are very valuable to the process. Below is a general timeline for the day. Remember to **ask questions** throughout the day. Our goal is to train you and help you succeed!

Included in this packet is information for both you and your legislator. Information on the Bottle Bill, the Health Education Bill, the "Think outside the Bottle" campaign, and other important handouts are included. Please try to familiarize yourself with your folder during "downtime".

Timeline:

8:00-8:30 – Welcome and breakfast

8:30-9:00 – Chalice lighting, outline of the day, and ice-breaker

9:00-9:30 - Introduction of issues

9:30-10:30 – Issues Orientation

Sarah Steinfeld – Director of CARE for Youth, The Health Education Bill

Meryl Baier – Update the Bottle Bill

10:30-11:15 - Small group discussion of issues and presentation skills and role play

11:15-12:15-Lunch

12:30 - Walk to State House

1:00-2:30 – Meetings with legislators

2:30 – Return to meeting place

3:00 – 4:00 – Ice cream sundaes and wrap-up including writing thank you notes

Thanks for coming!!!

Meryl and Becky

Chalice lighting

**Until one is committed, there is hesitancy,
the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness.
Concerning all acts of initiative and creation,
there is one elementary truth,
the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans:
That the moment one definitely commits oneself, then
Providence moves too.
All sorts of things occur to help one that would otherwise never
have occurred.
A whole stream of events issues from the decision
raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents
and meetings and material assistance,
which no one could have dreamt would have come their way.**



Updated Bottle Bill Factsheet

Since the Bottle Bill's inception in 1983, over 30 billion containers have been redeemed under the Massachusetts bottle bill, contributing to a healthier environment, cleaner and safer communities, and a stronger economy. But as consumers' tastes change, the bottle bill must be updated to keep up with our times.

Who Pays for the Redemption System?

Just as they were 25 years ago, the bottlers and beverage distributors are the major opponents of an update to the Bottle Bill because they are the ones who fund the system - paying to clean up the impact of selling 2.2 BILLION *deposit* beverage containers every year. The fee is tiny - only 1.6 cents per container. Bearing the cost of a product's waste should be the responsibility of beverage producers and their consumers, not taxpayers and communities. The bottle bill is a model for this kind of sustainability.

Litter/Trash

How many beverage containers are currently littered/trashed in the commonwealth? Over 1 BILLION containers per year are littered or sent to our rapidly disappearing landfills - enough to fill Fenway Park to overflowing!

Revenue

Unclaimed deposits currently provide over \$3 million annually in badly needed funding. Under the expansion, approximately \$15 million in additional unclaimed deposit revenue could be generated. The addition of these items would be handled under the existing infrastructure for bottle deposits.

Keeping current with consumer habits

The original bottle bill was never meant to be unresponsive to changes in consumer behavior. According to former State Senator Lois Pines, the lead sponsor of our bottle bill, "*Had anyone the slightest inkling that in a few years containers filled with water, iced tea and juice would compose 25% of the beverage market, I would have absolutely drafted the law to place deposits on these containers as well. At the time of passage of the Bottle Bill, the only other drinks were small cans of pineapple and tomato juice which needed to be opened at home with a can opener!*"

Decreases Landfill Use

The more trash we burn and bury in the Commonwealth, the worse our environmental problems become. Fourteen towns have lost drinking water from contamination suspected to come from leaking landfills. Solid waste incinerators are one of the chief sources of mercury emitted into the air. While soda containers are only 2.7% of the waste stream by volume, and all beverage containers (excluding milk containers) are 4.4% of the waste stream making Drink containers take up far more space far beyond their weight, and unlike many other materials, PET bottles never break down.

Recycling and Energy

Covering non-carbonated containers would be good for recycling industries. Most of the containers under the proposed update are made of PET, 99% of which is petroleum. Recycled PET bottles are primarily used for textiles and non-food containers. But even though there is a severe national shortage of RPET, less than 20% of all PET bottles are recycled – and this percentage has been decreasing in recent years. At the same time, PET bottle usage is skyrocketing, as is the global demand for oil. By increasing the recycling rate for PET bottles, we are conserving our oil supply. In 2002, on a national level, 3.2 billion pounds of PET bottles failed to be recycled and wound up in landfills. Had the 3.2 billion pounds of wasted PET bottles been recycled in 2002, they would have saved the energy equivalent of 6.2 million barrels of oil.

Recycling

The Bottle Bill also complements curbside recycling. Recycling rates when these two programs are combined are far higher than either program generates alone. The Bottle Bill works in areas where curbside recycling is more difficult – inner cities, rural areas, offices, and public places. On a larger environmental scale, increased recycling means less pollution from the production of virgin materials. An updated bottle bill would increase the supply of recycled plastics, thus reducing the use of fossil fuels.

Litter

Requiring a 5-cent deposit on *all* beverage containers would decrease litter and increase recycling. States that have implemented bottle bills have experienced a 70-85% reduction in litter and a 30 - 35% reduction in overall litter after the bottle bill was implemented. In our waterways, non-redeemable containers are 9 times more likely to wind up as litter than deposit containers.

Support

The public is very supportive of the bottle bill. In a recent survey, 84% of Massachusetts residents voiced support for expanding the bottle bill. In 1982, an effort mounted by opponents to repeal the bill was rejected 93% to 7%. Additionally, Governor Patrick has expressed interest in expanding the bill to water-based beverages.

Jobs and the Economy

Gains in employment have been shown in nearly every state with deposit systems. In Michigan an additional 4,684 jobs were added to the economy. New York found that 3,800 new jobs were created in that state. Massachusetts and Vermont gained 1,800 and 350 jobs respectively.

***Information courtesy of Sierra Club of Massachusetts, www.sierraclubmass.org



Ten Reasons to Support the Bottle Bill Update

The 2007-2008 Bottle Bill Update would increase recycling rates by adding bottled water, sports drinks, iced tea, and other beverages to the current bottle deposit system. Since its inception, more than 30 billion containers have been redeemed under the Massachusetts bottle bill, contributing to a healthier environment, cleaner and safer communities, and a stronger economy. But as consumers' tastes change, the bottle bill must be updated to keep up with our times.

Keeping current with consumer habits

The original bottle bill was never meant to be non-reactive to consumer trends. According to former State Senator Lois Pines, the lead sponsor of the original bottle bill, *"Had anyone the slightest inkling that in a few years containers filled with water, iced tea and juice would compose over 25% of the market, I would have absolutely drafted the law to place deposits on these containers as well. At the time of passage of the Bottle Bill, the only other drinks were small cans of pineapple and tomato juice which needed to be opened at home with a can opener!"*

Decrease Landfill Use

The more trash we burn and bury in the Commonwealth, the worse our environmental problems become. Fourteen towns have lost drinking water from contamination suspected to come from leaking landfills. Drink containers take up space far beyond their weight.

Recycling and Energy

Covering non-carbonated containers would be good for recycling industries. Most of the containers under the proposed update are made of PET, 99% of which is petroleum. Reclaimed PET plastic bottles (RPET) are primarily used for textiles and non-food containers. But even though there is a severe national shortage of RPET, only 20% of all PET bottles are recycled – and this number is decreasing every year. At the same time, the nation's consumption and disposal of PET bottles is skyrocketing. In 2003, an estimated 2.8 billion pounds of PET beverage bottles were wasted, up from 0.8 billion pounds wasted one decade earlier. Had these bottles been recycled, we would have saved the energy equivalent of about 12.8 million barrels of crude oil.

Recycling

The Bottle Bill complements curbside recycling. About 68%¹ of covered beverage containers are redeemed under the Massachusetts bottle bill; an additional 10-15% are estimated to be recovered through curbside programs. In states where deposit and curbside programs both operate, the number of containers recovered is far higher than in states without deposits. The Bottle Bill works in areas where curbside recycling is less effective. And it is the best solution for the millions of beverages consumed "on the go."

Litter

Requiring a 5-cent deposit on *all* drink containers would decrease litter and increase recycling. States that have implemented bottle bills have experienced a 70-85% reduction in beverage container litter and a 30 - 35% reduction in overall litter after the bottle bill was implemented. In our waterways, non-redeemable containers are 9 times more likely to wind up as litter than deposit containers. Unlike many other materials, PET bottles NEVER break down, and they pose threats to marine life for hundreds, and perhaps thousands of years.

Public Support

The public is very supportive of the bottle bill. In a recent survey, 84% of Massachusetts residents support the expansion of the bottle bill and an effort mounted by opponents in 1982 to repeal the bill that was rejected 93% to 7%. Additionally, the Governor strongly supports the implementation of an updated bottle bill. The bill is also being supported by environmental groups throughout the state.

Producer Responsibility

Bearing the cost of a product's waste should be the responsibility of beverage producers and consumers, not taxpayers and communities. The bottle bill is a model for this kind of sustainable financing.

Jobs and the Economy

Gains in employment have been shown in nearly every state with deposit systems. In Michigan an additional 4,684 jobs were added to the economy. New York found that 3,800 new jobs were created in that state. Massachusetts and Vermont gained 1,800 and 350 jobs respectively. Many of these jobs come in the recycling sector, which now produces important – and sustainable – raw materials to be used in manufacturing.

Revenue

Unclaimed deposits currently provide \$37 million annually in badly needed funding. Under the expansion, **more than \$15 million would be added**. These funds should be placed in a restored Clean Environment Fund, helping to increase recycling rates, anti-litter campaigns, and parks maintenance. Revenue generated by the bottle bill is a **voluntary fee, not a tax**, since deposits are fully refundable to consumers.

Supporting the Redemption Centers

The bill includes provisions to increase the handling fee to 3 cents. Redemption centers have not had an increase in handling fees in 17 years. They are currently experiencing huge increases in operating costs; many of them have been forced to close. This increase would allow them to continue operating. Like the current handling fee of 2.25 cents, this increase would not be funded by the state.

Information courtesy of Sierra Club of Massachusetts, www.sierraclubmass.org