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Commissioner Katie Dykes  
Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection  
79 Elm Street  
Hartford, CT 06106-5127

RE: Proposed Revocation of Order Allowing the Use of “CTRV” on Beverage Container Labels

Commissioner Dykes:

The International Bottled Water Association (IBWA)<sup>1</sup> appreciates this opportunity to provide comments on the planned revocation of the order allowing the use of the term “CTRV” on the label of beverage containers that are part of the state’s redemption program. IBWA has several questions and concerns about this proposed change and recommends that the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) withdraw the planned revocation of the “CTRV” Order. Provided below are several questions and comments for your consideration.

What concern does this proposed change seek to address? The bottle deposit rate increased from \$0.05 to \$0.10 less than 12 months ago, and it was only in the previous year that new products were added to the bottle redemption program. The purpose of allowing the use of “CTRV” on product labels was to eliminate the need for multiple label revisions in a short time period and avoid the need for future label revisions if the deposit amount changes. Our members are reporting large increases in Connecticut redemptions of their products. Bottled water consumers clearly understand that a redeemed bottle is now worth \$0.10. So, the current Order does not need to be revoked.

Is there data to show a need to revoke the Order allowing the use of the term “CTRV” on the product label? It would be helpful for all stakeholders to see and understand the data that demonstrates why DEEP thinks this revocation is necessary. While anecdotal feedback can be valuable, a decision that will have such a major impact on the production, sale, and redemption of containers should be driven by fact-based data. We believe that such data will show a significant increase in redemption for most beverage products under the current Order.

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<sup>1</sup> IBWA is the trade association representing all segments of the bottled water industry, including spring, artesian, mineral, sparkling, well, groundwater and purified bottled waters. IBWA represents bottled water bottlers, distributors and suppliers throughout the United States, including several small, medium, and large-size companies doing business in Connecticut. IBWA’s stated mission is to serve the members and the public by championing bottled water as an important choice for healthy hydration and lifestyle, and promoting an environmentally responsible and sustainable industry.

It is likely that the data will show that recently added products to the redemption system may still have a lower redemption rate than recent statewide redemption data, as consumers learn and adjust. Based on prior experiences in Oregon, New York and even Connecticut's 2009 expansion to bottled water, we know that new products take additional time to achieve redemption rates similar to existing products as consumers learn what can now be redeemed. In a statement from the Container Recycling Institute (CRI), the organization that closely follows, provides data on, and actively supports beverage container deposit programs, conveys the same message. According to Susan Collins, CRI President, "...program modernizations passed in California and Connecticut should lead to increases in the volume of bottles and cans redeemed as the new provisions take effect. However, changes in the actual redemption rates – number of containers redeemed as a percentage of number on deposit sold – can lag given the time needed for more consumers to learn about these changes and adjust their behavior to return newly eligible bottles and cans for the deposit refund." We believe that redemption rates for newly added products will steadily increase as consumers better understand that they are covered by the current deposit program.

What public education and outreach has been undertaken to help consumers better understand what's included in the CT Bottle Bill 3.0 program? Has outreach been extended beyond grocery store notices to convenience or package stores, among others? Before taking any action to revoke the Order allowing use of the term "CTRV" on product labels, we recommend a comprehensive educational outreach campaign to consumers. This would be a much more expedient and affordable way forward and positive outcomes could be visible much faster.

In contrast, prohibiting beverage manufacturers from using the term "CTRV" on product labels is burdensome at a time when grocery prices are near record highs. Companies are beginning bottled water production to meet summer demand and have already manufactured products labeled with CTRV worth tens of millions of dollars. Depletion of existing products could take several years. Beyond the financial loss of existing inventory, manufacturers estimate it will cost several million dollars to create new printing plates used to print redemption information on bottles, produce new product, and address older product which would now be mislabeled. Some of that product could require disposal which would not only be wasteful but counter the sustainability efforts of DEEP.

Frequent labeling changes to products is a massive expense to manufacturers that directly impacts consumers – not only in the price of the products but also in a fundamental understanding of what is and what is not redeemable or recyclable. A well designed and implemented education campaign would also help the state to increase redemption numbers across the board on all products, without wholesale changes that would further confuse consumers.

Should DEEP decide to revoke the Order allowing the use of the term "CTRV" on product labels, manufacturers would need a minimum of three years to fully comply with the new labeling requirements.

The bottled water industry is committed to ensuring that Connecticut consumers continue to have access to the nation's number one packaged beverage. We support Connecticut's efforts to properly recycle beverage containers through the state bottle redemption or curbside recycling programs.

We appreciate your consideration of our comments and concerns and welcome continued conversation on this matter.

Sincerely,

James P. Toner, Jr.  
Director of Government Relations  
IBWA