



## BOTTLE BILL EXPANDER

### A.8044 (Sweeney, et al.)

#### Summary

This bill would amend the environmental Conservation law § 27-1003(1) and the finance law to expand the definition of “beverage” in the state returnable container act (the bottle bill) to include non-carbonated drinks other than milk and liquor, and to direct the unclaimed deposit money derived from that program to the environmental protection fund. The measure also makes provision for municipal assistance for New York City’s bottle collection efforts and raises the handling fee for retailers.

#### Explanation

Once seen as an anti-litter strategy, returnable container deposit laws - bottle bills - have proved even more effective as a means of diverting valuable material from landfills and incinerators. States with container deposits enjoy an average glass, aluminum and plastic container recovery rate of 80%, while non-deposit states only manage 40%. New York, however, ranks below other bottle bill states, only 76% of our beverage containers being reclaimed. We can and should do better for litter, environmental and fiscal reasons.

The framers of the original bottle bill in 1982 did not foresee the dramatic increase in bottled water use, nor the advent of sports drinks, fruit juices, and other beverages that are increasingly popular today. Not only would this bill remove a substantial quantity of reusable glass, metal and plastic from municipal waste streams - millions of tons of containers would be taken out of New York City’s expensive exportation scheme alone - it would also wisely send the unclaimed deposit money back to the community coffers for worthy environmental projects, including waste reduction and recycling efforts.

The deposit-based redemption infrastructure, which is also an excellent source of jobs, presents a progressive alternative to expensive curbside pickup and other container recycling strategies, since it assigns responsibility to producers, distributors and consumers, rather than to taxpayers. This measure also addresses inner city concerns about the near-term mechanics of container take-back with built-in subsidy assistance for urban redemption centers and a substantial increase in the handling fee provided retail facilities that take back bottles and cans.

The state’s bottle bill has allowed New Yorkers to become full partners in a system that averts disposal costs, creates employment, and is a fair, reasonable, economical and effective means of conserving resources. This bill would make it easier for merchants to do their part, reduce the confusion of consumers, and close a financial loophole in the current system that has allowed nearly \$200 million in unclaimed deposits to go to the bottling industry instead of to the public.



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Key to Legislative Ratings:

🌲🌲🌲 Major Benefit

🌲🌲 Substantial Benefit

🌲 Beneficial

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A recent poll of New York voters showed overwhelming support for expanding the bottle bill and for closing the “unclaimed deposit” loophole. The time has come to bring this remarkably successful program up to date. This common sense bottle bill expander has been elevated from the status of a “good idea” to that of policy imperative.

**Environmental Advocates of New York strongly supports this bill.**

**Memo 28**