



# SUPPORTS



Key to Legislative Ratings:

🌲🌲🌲 Major Benefit

🌲🌲 Substantial Benefit

🌲 Beneficial

## BOTTLE BILL EXPANDER

**A.8044-A (Sweeney, et al.)**  
**S.5850-A (Marcellino, et al.)**

### Summary

This bill would amend New York’s Environmental Conservation Law § 27-1003(1) and 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 provisions for municipal assistance for New York City’s bottle collection efforts and raises the handling fee for retailers. Simply put, the Bigger Better Bottle Bill would update New York’s current bottle deposit law to meet the drinking habits of consumers today.

### Explanation

Once seen as an anti-litter strategy, returnable container deposit laws—bottle bills—have proven 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 percent, while non-deposit states only manage 40 percent. New York, however, ranks below other bottle bill states, with only 76 percent of our beverage containers being reclaimed. We can and should do better for environmental and fiscal reasons.

In 1982, the framers of the original bottle bill did not foresee the dramatic increase in bottled water use, nor the advent of sports drinks 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 send unclaimed deposit money back to community coffers for critical environmental projects such as 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, as it assigns responsibility to producers, distributors and consumers rather than 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 annually in unclaimed deposits to go to the bottling industry instead of the public.

A recent poll of New York voters showed overwhelming support for expanding the bottle bill and closing the unclaimed deposit loophole. The time has come to update this successful program.

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

**Memo 52**

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