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**TESTIMONY OF THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NEW YORK STATE  
JOINT HEARING OF THE SENATE ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION & ASSEMBLY  
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION COMMITTEES  
REGARDING THE EXAMINATION OF LEGISLATIVE SOLUTIONS TO INCREASE THE  
EFFECTIVENESS OF THE BOTTLE BILL**

**October 23, 2023**

**Albany, N.Y.**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Erica Smitka and I am the Legislative Director for the League of Women Voters of New York State. The League is a nonpartisan, grassroots organization with a mission to educate the public to become engaged and informed voters, particularly on issues that further the public good.

The League implores Governor Hochul to include a necessary expansion of the bottle bill in her budget for the next fiscal year. An expansion of this bill will increase the types of containers allowed to be deposited, increase the redemption rate and increase the deposit rate.

**Climate and Waste Crisis**

The original bottle bill came into effect in 1983, at a time when New York State was searching for ways to handle the buildup of solid waste as landfills were reaching capacity<sup>1</sup>. The bill was effective at reducing litter in under resourced communities, waterways, and along beaches; increasing recycling rates; and creating a funding stream for critical environmental programs. In 2020, New York's redemption rate was at 64%. The bottle bill reduces roadside container litter by 70%, and in 2020, 5.5 billion containers were recycled in the state.

However, since 1983 New York's solid waste crisis has only grown exponentially. As of 2019, solid waste contributed to 11% of all greenhouse gas emissions in the state of New York<sup>2</sup>. Our waste problem has gotten larger and therefore our means of reducing and addressing that waste must also be expanded. With an expansion of the bottle bill, the redemption rate in NY could soar from a mere 64% to 90%. If we were to raise the deposit rate hand-in-hand with inflation it should be at 15 cents a bottle. In today's economy, 5 cents is not enough to incentivize most

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/1983/07/10/nyregion/towns-scramble-for-state-landfill-funds.html>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/administration\\_pdf/ghgwaste22.pdf](https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/administration_pdf/ghgwaste22.pdf)

individuals to recycle. States with higher deposit rates have higher redemption rates. For example, Oregon has a 10-cent deposit and a 90% return rate on recyclables bottles<sup>3</sup>.

Waste and how we deposit waste has a direct impact on the effects of climate change. Expanding this bill would be a proven and digestible step towards reducing the effects of climate change on everyday New Yorkers.

### **Fiscal Impact in NYS**

In a year when we expect the budget to be in deficit it's essential that policies such as expanding the bottle bill be enacted. This bill would easily help increase revenue in New York State. A recent report from the non-profit group ReLoop estimates \$171M-350M in additional revenue for NY state by modernizing the bottle bill<sup>4</sup>. This bill is a simple stream by which to increase revenue in a way that will not put a significant strain on our current system.

### **Environmental Justice Implications**

The bottle bill would also have a justice impact by giving a much-deserved raise to more than 10,000 vulnerable workers in the state who earn their income by collecting and redeeming containers. Additional funds can be used to increase redemption options in low-income communities (often "food deserts") and address other litter and solid waste problems.

There is no need to re-invent the wheel. This bill is proven to be an effective program. After four decades of success, it's time for the bottle bill to be expanded.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://thehill.com/homenews/senate/4229330-u-s-consumers-need-incentive-convenience-transparency-to-effectively-recycle-environmental-experts-tell-senators/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://bottlebillreimagined.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Reimagining-the-Bottle-Bill-FINAL-JUNE-2022.pdf>