

# *Democrat and Chronicle*

## *Bottle bill reform uncapped*

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(February 12, 2004) — A \$20,000 poll, commissioned by a coalition of state environmental groups, indicates there is strong support among New York voters for a reformed bottle bill.

The results of the survey, in an 18-page report, will be published at 11 a.m. today, and will be available at [www.eany.org](http://www.eany.org).

The poll, conducted by the Michigan-based Public Policy Associates, shows that 70 percent of voters support an expanded law that would put a deposit on non-carbonated beverages like bottled water, iced tea, juice and sports drinks. Such beverages were a small or non-existent part of the market when New York passed its first bottle bill in 1983, and when minor amendments were made in 1988.

The poll, commissioned by the Albany-based Environmental Advocates of New York and three other groups, also shows that 86 percent of New York voters support the idea of the state taking back money from unclaimed deposits every year.

Right now, that money — between \$140 million and \$180 million a year — is kept by the bottling industry, which opposes any reform of the bottle bill.

Two bills in Albany now include both ideas. Assembly bill A.3922 has 50 co-sponsors, including David Koon, D-Perinton and Syracuse-area Assemblywoman Joan K. Christensen. In the Senate, S.1696-A has

three sponsors, none from the Rochester region.

The current bottle bill, officially the Returnable Container Act, requires a nickel deposit on beer, soda and wine cooler containers.

The New York State Beer Wholesalers Association and other industry groups claim that an expanded bottle bill would unfairly tax the average consumer. Grocery stores oppose any change also, calling a deposit on juice and similar drinks a tax on children.

Corporations like Coca Cola and PepsiCo “hire some very powerful people” to lobby against bottle bill reform, said David Higby of the Albany group, which plans a press conference on the issue today in Albany.

He said industry lobbyists have bottled up bottle bill reform in Albany for years.

Laura Haight, a recycling expert with another poll sponsor, the New York Public Interest Research Group in Albany, called the poll “a Valentine’s message to our state lawmakers” — proof that New Yorkers would “love” a new bottle bill.

Other poll sponsors: Natural Resources Defense Council and the [Container Recycling Institute](http://www.ContainerRecyclingInstitute.org).

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