

## **Earth Day Lobby Day 2005**

# **NEWS RELEASE**

For Immediate Release:  
April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2005

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### **ACTIVISTS UNVEIL "THE BOTTLES" Thousands of discarded bottles encircle the State Capitol**

(Albany) Environmental activists unveiled "The Bottles" during this year's Earth Day Lobby Day on Tuesday, April 19th at noon. Inspired by Christo's "The Gates" at Central Park, the State Capitol was "wrapped" with discarded beverage containers.

"The Bottles" highlights the need for the "Bigger Better Bottle Bill," which would update New York's deposit law to include non-carbonated beverages such as bottled water and iced tea. Without a deposit, most of these bottles and cans end up as litter or trash, rather than recycled.

"In one second, we discard 80 non-deposit beverage containers in New York," said Pete Looker, the activist who conceived and designed "The Bottles." "In 30 seconds, we generate enough non-deposit throwaways to circle the Capitol. What are we thinking?"

"Most non-deposit beverage containers end up in the trash or littering our communities, while most bottles and cans bearing a 5-cent refundable deposit are returned and recycled," said Laura Haight, senior environmental associate with NYPIRG. "This shows that the bottle bill works. We all have a responsibility to keep our communities clean, but the politicians in Albany are standing in the way by refusing to close the "litter loophole" in the current law."

"When you compare bottles of Pepsi and Aquafina, you realize they're exactly the same thing," said NYPIRG's legislative associate Bill Mahoney. "Expanding the Bottle Bill to include beverages like this that have exploded in popularity this past decade only makes "cents"."

"The bottle bill has been a resounding success in New York since it was instituted two decades ago, protecting our environment and natural resources while helping to clean up our communities," said Mark Dunlea, of the Capital District Greens. "We need to build upon this success and update the bottle bill to reflect the fact that we sell - and discard - many water and juice bottles. And we need to ensure that the hundreds of millions of dollars in unclaimed deposits are spent in promoting recycling rather than ending up in the pockets of Pepsi and Coke."

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Enacted in 1982, the bottle bill, which requires a 5-cent refundable deposit on beer and soda containers sold in New York, has been New York's most successful recycling and litter prevention program.

Over the past 20 years more than **80 billion** bottles and cans have been returned and recycled through the bottle bill. More than **five million** tons of plastic, glass and metal have been kept out of our landfills and incinerators. There is less litter and broken glass in our streets, parks, playgrounds and beaches, making them safer, cleaner, and more attractive.

The “Bigger, Better, Bottle Bill,” (A2517A/S1290A), sponsored by Assemblyman Thomas P. DiNapoli and Senator Kenneth LaValle, would update New York's bottle bill to include deposits on non-carbonated beverages such as bottled water, iced tea, juice and sports drinks. It would also require the beverage industry to return all unclaimed deposits to the state to fund recycling programs and other environmental needs, estimated at \$179 million a year.

The temporary installation required an estimated 2,400 plastic bottles, representing the number of non-carbonated beverage containers that New Yorkers discard every 30 seconds. The bottles were strung from more than 2,500 feet of security tape, much of it salvaged from industrial sites and reused. The bottles will be recycled at the conclusion of the event.

“The Bottles” will be on view for only fifteen minutes. “This is to symbolize that this common-sense legislation is currently ‘bottled up’ in the State Legislature, but that this status is only temporary,” said Haight.

"The Bottles" was held in conjunction with the annual Earth Day Lobby Day, which attracted hundreds of environmentalists from across the state. This year's priority issues include global warming, the Bigger Better Bottle Bill, wetlands protection, burn barrels, and preserving open space.

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