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Dear Editor,

We're writing to add some balance to Ms. Ross' story, "[What Concord Can Teach San Francisco About Banning Plastic Water Bottles](#)," published on WGBH online and affiliate stations on February 23, 2016.

There is new evidence showing that bans on the sale of bottled water don't necessarily reduce plastic waste, but they do put at risk the nutritional health of those affected. University of Vermont (UVM) Professor of Nutrition Rachel K. Johnson, PhD, MPH, RD, and her co-author conducted [research](#) on the bottled water sales ban adopted by UVM in 2013. The results showed that the ban resulted in a 33 percent increase in the number of unhealthy sugary drinks shipped to the campus. In addition, the campus used more single-use bottles after the bottled water sales ban was in effect—and less healthy beverages were being consumed out of those bottles. In an article in *The Hill* newspaper about her research, Professor Johnson concluded that: "Our study shows that these sorts of policies, regardless of the motivation behind their adoption, may result in the consumption of more calories and more added sugars, a perpetuation of unhealthy dietary choices, and—ironically—an increase in plastic waste."

In addition, the latest data from the Container Recycling Institute (CRI) shows that of all the beverage containers that are trashed instead of recycled, bottled water containers make up just 3.3 percent. Glass, aluminum and soda containers make up 87.9 percent. [This infographic](#) helps to put the data in perspective. PET plastic is in high demand by reclaimers and it's important to remind people that bottled water containers are 100 percent recyclable — even the cap. Also, as the CRI reports, the amount of bottled water containers that are thrown away instead of being recycled is actually 308,000 tonnes, not 2 million reported in Ms. Ross' story.

Peer-reviewed [research](#) has found that the vast majority of ocean trash is coming from China and other Asian countries where 76 – 90 percent of trash is "mismanaged" — dumped straight

into the ocean. Reducing plastic in the United States (where only 2 percent is classified as mismanaged trash) will have little effect, if any, on the Pacific garbage patch.

Finally, bottled water is comprehensively regulated by the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as a packaged food product. By federal law, the FDA regulations governing the safety and quality of bottled water must be at least as stringent as the EPA standards for tap water. And, in some very important cases, bottled water regulations are substantially more stringent. Bottled water that is made using municipal water is not the same as “repackaged tap water.” Once the municipal source water enters the bottled water plant several processes are employed to ensure that it meets the FDA’s purified water standard. These treatments can include ozonation, reverse osmosis, distillation, or de-ionization. The finished water product is then placed in a sealed bottle under sanitary conditions and sold to the consumer.

It is important to note that 70 percent of what people consume these days comes in some sort of packaging. PET plastic used to make bottled water containers is the most lightweight and recycled packaging of all beverages. Bottled water also uses the least amount of energy and water in its production, and it is the healthiest beverage on the shelf.

As Americans are making great efforts to choose healthier foods and beverages, it is not in the best interest of your readers to discourage consumption of this safe, healthy, and water-efficient product.

Thank you for reading and giving my concerns your attention. I respectfully request that you update your online story so consumers have access to both sides of the bottled water sales ban issue. I am happy to speak with you directly should you wish to discuss any of these points or answer other questions you may have.

You can learn more about bottled water by visiting [www.bottledwater.org](http://www.bottledwater.org).

Sincerely,

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