

Restricting or Banning Consumer Access to Bottled Water is Not in the Public Interest

People need to drink more water. The consumption of water, whether from the bottle or the tap, is a good thing and any actions that discourage people from drinking bottled water are not in the public interest. Banning or restricting access to bottled water directly impacts the right of people to choose the healthiest beverage on the shelf. And for many, bottled water is a critical alternative to other packaged beverages, which are often less healthy. Bottled water must therefore be available wherever packaged beverages are sold.

Important Facts about Bottled Water

✓ **Bottled water is the smart choice for healthy hydration**

For those who want to eliminate or moderate calories, sugar, caffeine, artificial flavors or colors, and other ingredients from their diet, choosing bottled water is the right move. ***In fact, since 1998, approximately 73% of the growth in bottled water consumption has come from people switching from carbonated soft drinks, juices, and milk.***

Choosing bottled water is a smart decision and a healthy choice when it comes to beverage options. People choose bottled water for several reasons, including its refreshing taste, reliable quality, zero calories and additives, and convenience. Removing bottled water as a packaged beverage option will result in consumers choosing less healthy beverages.

✓ **Bottled water is a key resource for helping to reduce obesity**

One-third of American adults are overweight and another one-third is obese. Drinking zero-calorie beverages, such as water, instead of sugary drinks is regularly cited as a key component of a more healthful lifestyle. For example, even though it promotes greater consumption of tap water, the University of California, Berkeley, decided *not* to ban bottled water because of concerns that it would cause students to drink less healthy, sweetened beverages. The University of Michigan opted to invest in expanding access to hydration stations in addition to keeping bottled water available on its campus. "We're not considering a ban," said Andy Berki, manager of campus sustainability. "We're just working hard on increasing the infrastructure so that people can make a choice."

✓ **Bottled water is the best hydration source when either tap water or consumer health is compromised**

The bottled water industry supports a strong public water system. However, the water from public water systems is often compromised after emergency situations or natural disasters (e.g., hurricanes, floods, tornados, fires, or boil alerts). During these times, bottled water is a necessary and reliable option to deliver clean, safe drinking water.

Certain consumers may also require reliable access to bottled water due to medical issues, such as compromised immune systems, allergies, cancer, or other significant health conditions. In fact, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that individuals with compromised immune systems drink bottled water.

✓ **Bottled water's environmental footprint is the lowest of all packaged beverages**

Banning or restricting access to bottled water will just shift consumption to other beverage products whose containers are made of the same material as bottled water. It will not, therefore, reduce the amount of plastic bottles in the waste stream.

Between 2000 and 2011, the average weight of a 16.9-ounce PET plastic bottle has declined 47.7%, saving 3.3 billion pounds of PET resin since 2000. In fact, many bottled water companies are already using up to 50% recycled material in their plastic bottles. Carbonated soft drinks are less able to significantly reduce the amount of plastic in their containers because the thinner plastic isn't able to contain the drink's carbonation.

All bottled water containers are 100% recyclable, and PET plastic bottled water containers are the single most recycled item in nationwide curbside collection programs. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), plastic bottles make up less than one-third of one percent of the U.S. waste stream. At 38.6%, the recycling rate for single-serve PET plastic bottled water containers more than doubled between 2003 and 2011. And, while the bottled water industry supports strong community recycling initiatives, a continued focus on increased recycling is critical.

✓ **Bottled water is comprehensively regulated and consistently reliable**

Bottled water is comprehensively regulated by the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as a packaged food product and it provides a consistently safe and reliable source of drinking water. By federal law, the FDA regulations governing the safety and quality of bottled water must be at least as stringent as the EPA regulations that govern tap water. In some cases, the bottled water regulations are more stringent. And, in some very important cases like lead, coliform bacteria, and E. coli, bottled water regulations are substantially more stringent.

All bottled water products - whether from groundwater or public water sources - are produced utilizing a multi-barrier approach. From source to finished product, a multi-barrier approach helps prevent possible harmful contamination to the finished product as well as storage, production, and transportation equipment. Measures in a multi-barrier approach may include one or more of the following: source protection, source monitoring, reverse osmosis, distillation, micro-filtration, carbon filtration, ozonation, and ultraviolet (UV) light.

As a result of comprehensive government regulation and the effective multi-barrier production system, bottled water provides a safe, consistent source of clean drinking water. There is, however, an inherent variability in public water system quality due to its method of delivery (i.e., through a piped distribution system and not in a sealed container).

✓ **Bottled water plays an important economic role in day-to-day life**

Not only does the manufacture and sale of bottled water products create good jobs in the U.S., it also contributes to the national economy as a whole via the industry's economic ripple effect that benefits agriculture, manufacturing, construction, transportation and many other businesses whose livelihood depends on the bottled water industry.

In 2011 the bottled water industry was a dynamic part of the U.S. economy, accounting for about \$109.8 billion in output, or just below 1% of gross domestic product (GDP).

Bottled water manufacturers, along with their wholesale and retail partners, directly or indirectly employed approximately 499,241 Americans in 2011. And, the consumption of bottled water beverages throughout the country generated \$638.3 million in state sales taxes.