

College Campus Toolkit

Third Party Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor & Articles Supporting Bottled Water

The articles and letters below present arguments and positions in support of bottled water. They were published in newspapers and magazines and were not written by IBWA. These articles and letters provide some good examples of potential talking points and arguments, including the importance of consumer choice and the availability of healthy beverage options.

College Campus Ban Related

Campus Times: “Questioning the bottle ban”

February 21, 2013

<http://www.campustimes.org/2013/02/21/questioning-the-bottle-ban/>

Roughly 16 universities across the United States and Canada have banned the sale of bottled water on their campuses, according to the “Ban the Bottle” campaign website. Team Green is hoping to add UR to that list.

The on-campus discussion has focused mainly on whether bottled or tap water is better, with Team Green conducting taste tests and some student surveys. Unfortunately, that is not the real issue at hand. The real debate is about whether or not banning all bottled water sales is the right decision for this campus.

It’s not.

Environmentally, it would seem that banning all bottled water would reduce waste, but there are unseen consequences. First, it takes much more energy to make reusable water bottles than it does to make recyclable plastic water bottles. A 1994 article in “Environmental Management” demonstrated that you would need to use a standard, reusable plastic cup over 200 times in order for its energy impact — including dish washing — to be less than that of foam cups. This same principle applies to reusable and plastic water bottles. Also, once those reusable water bottles have run their course, they usually end up in a landfill.

There has been no tangible evidence of sustainable success at other universities that have implemented the ban nor any theoretical research on a larger scale. Even if bottled water is a huge externality, an enormous social cost, a ban is not the way to minimize that. Since some students may value the convenience over the cost, a tax could be a possible solution. Banning it outright is not the economically or environmentally savvy choice unless you want students starting bottled-water black markets.

Banning the sale of bottled water will also drive up the sale of other bottled beverages including unhealthy sodas and sugary juice drinks. Director of Wilson Commons Laura Ballou said this would also

pose a problem for campus events and student activities. If event planners cannot hand out bottled water, they would have to resort to less healthy options or use wasteful disposable cups because it can't be guaranteed that every visitor will bring their own water bottle. Additionally, free bottled water is often donated from Coca-Cola, making the ban a large cost increase for student events. Similarly, a ban on bottled water sales would be a huge decrease in annual revenue for Dining Services in the amount of approximately \$274,557, based on the 2011-2012 fiscal year measures.

Even if UR was to proceed with the ill-advised ban, the school is not equipped to handle it. Half of the buildings on the Residential Quad do not have water fountains and the ones in Wilson Commons are few and far between. What's worse, adding new water fountains or improving existing ones is an extreme cost that Facilities says is too great right now.

There also seems to be a definitive lack of student support for the ban; most attendees of the recent panel discussion on Thursday, Feb. 7 seemed opposed. Just because "everyone else is doing it," which isn't even the case, is not a reason to move forward. The CT holds UR and its students to a higher standard than that of the bandwagon mentality.

Director of Dining Services Cam Schauf says that this conversation should happen now so that we can make a decision and move on. We think it's time to move on. Students should be focusing on more important things such as actually researching the potential environmental or economic effects of a policy like this. Jumping to conclusions — let alone bans — is an irresponsible example to set for a University community that prides itself on rigorous research and intellectual pursuits.

The Loyola Phoenix: "A final argument against the water bottle ban"

March 28, 2012

<http://www.loyolaphoenix.com/a-final-argument-against-the-water-bottle-ban>

Last week's Phoenix issue contained a well-written article regarding the bottled water referendum that is being voted on this Wednesday, March 28. As a vocal opponent of the ban and was one of the Senators who voted against it, I have the following comments.

- 1) The Student Environmental Association (SEA) claims that bottled water is a human right and social justice issue. But how is social justice defined? In all my time on campus I have yet to hear a definition provided. Personally, I do not define true justice as equality, although the ban tries to equate the two. Justice is not taking from the people who 'have' in order to help the people who 'have not.' Justice is giving each person their due; that's why criminals get punishments that fit the crimes; nothing more, nothing less. Is taking bottled water away from us true justice? I'm inclined to say no. Taking bottled water away from us is forcing equality upon us. The ban takes from those who 'have' — the students and their bottled water — in order to help (or try to help) a group of 'have-nots' — people who have been victims of water privatization. The bottled water ban is not true justice, — it is forced equality.
- 2) 2) The freedom to choose is a human right. To prove this point I made a little three-step proof:
 - 1) To be free is a human right.
 - 2) To choose is to be free.
 - 3) Therefore, to choose is a human right.Opponents of this line of thinking say that students can still choose to buy bottled water; they just can't buy it on campus. That's true, but it ignores the bigger point: human rights are universal. They have no boundaries. A human right in one place is a human right in all places.

Human rights are not restricted to a certain time and certain place. Thus, our right to choose applies to campus as well. Loyola's campus is part of the very same earth that victims of water privatization live on. Those victims have a right to water, I'm not denying that. But we, too, have a right and that right is the right to choose what water we want. We do not lose that right when we step on Loyola's campus. The ban on bottled water ignores those facts.

- 3) My last point is not an argument against the ban. It's a point I want to make to the readership of The Phoenix: there is another side to this issue. SEA is a large and popular organization; there is no denying that. But they do not speak for everyone on campus. I am against this ban, as are the nine other Senators who voted with me against the Uncap Loyola Resolution back in December. Supporters of the ban have been very vocal about their cause, and that's not a bad thing in the least. But the pro-ban voices have drowned out the anti-ban voices on campus, leading to a lack of dialogue between the different viewpoints and giving the impression that everyone wants to see bottled water gone. I encourage you to investigate both sides and draw your own conclusion.

After careful consideration of both sides of the issue, my vote on the bottled water ban will be a firm no. I encourage the readership of the Loyola Phoenix to weigh both sides and come to their own conclusions and vote today on whether or not they want to ban bottled water from our campus.

by Dominic Lynch
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BostInno.com: "Why College Campuses Shouldn't be Banning Bottled Water"

March 14, 2012

<http://bostinno.com/2012/03/14/why-college-campuses-shouldnt-be-banning-bottled-water/>

Two years ago, Brown banned all water bottle sales, after having previously sold 320,000 bottles a year, according to [Bloomberg](#). Harvard, Dartmouth and Princeton have now started installing "hydration stations" (left) into their newer buildings, welcoming in students with reusable Nalgene instead of bottled up Poland Spring.

Beyond those Ivy League schools, there are still more than 85 campuses banning the sale or trying to restrict the use of plastic water bottles. What gives?

In 2007, Americans consumed over 50 billion single-serve bottles of water. About 30-40 million of those bottles, however, ended up in landfills, according to [Ban the Bottle](#), a blog devoted to "banning plastic water bottles and staying hydrated." The blog also claims it takes 17 million barrels of oil per year to make the United States' plastic water bottles — enough oil to fuel 1.3 million cars for a year.

All that said: I get it. I understand why there are more than a dozen schools banning bottles of water. But, does it even make sense?

No. Schools are essentially banning the healthiest drink they sell on their shelves. That's less than ideal, considering 68.3 percent of adults ages 20 years and over are either obese or overweight, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). Tie those statistics into this chart from [WebMD](#), and tell me what you think.

Beverage	Serving Size	Calories
Soda	12 ounces	124-189
Diet soda	12 ounces	0-7
Bottled sweet tea	12 ounces	129-143
Brewed tea, unsweet	12 ounces	4
Orange juice, unsweetened	12 ounces	157-168
Apple juice, unsweetened	12 ounces	169-175
Tomato/Vegetable juice	12 ounces	80
Cranberry juice cocktail	12 ounces	205
Whole Milk	12 ounces	220
2% low-fat milk	12 ounces	183
1% low-fat milk	12 ounces	154
Nonfat milk	12 ounces	125
Soy milk	12 ounces	147-191
Coffee, black	12 ounces	0-4
Coffee with cream (2 tablespoons half and half)	12 ounces	39-43
Coffee with whipped cream (2 tablespoons from can)	12 ounces	15-19
Coffee with heavy whipping cream (2 tablespoons)	12 ounces	104-108
Caffe Latte, whole milk (Starbucks)	12 ounces	200
Caffe Latte, nonfat (Starbucks)	12 ounces	120
Sports drink (like Gatorade)	12 ounces	94
Energy drink (like Red Bull)	12 ounces	160
Beer	12 ounces	153
Red wine	5 ounces	125
White wine	5 ounces	122
Hard liquor (vodka, rum, whiskey, gin; 80 proof)	1.5 ounces	96

When an insatiable thirst hits, what do you think students will do if they're not around a hydration station? I bet a vending machine won't be too far. Oh wait — if there's a ban, students have no other option but to reach for juice, soda or an energy drink. Now you've seen the calories. A health services official from the University of California, Berkley told Bloomberg the school opted against banning bottled water because of their concern it would, indeed, drive students to more sugary beverages.

Nestlé Waters North America (NWNA) also completed a [life cycle assessment](#), which [one Harvard student](#) actually helped commission. What the company found is that water has the lightest environmental footprint of all packaged beverages. So, while we can spout off daunting numbers — remember the 17 million barrels of oil? — are we aware of what we're promoting instead?

Now, trying to restrict sales is one thing. I'm all for green education. But is an all-out ban logical? Columbia University told Bloomberg they haven't banned bottled water either, because they knew students would then just buy it elsewhere.

My suggestion is this: Promote your hydration stations. Make sure your Nalgene bottles are closer to the \$5 mark. Find a way to bring the local company [Greenbean Recycle](#) to your campus, because they know how to at least make recycling fun. **But**, don't flat-out ban plastic water bottles. In the grand scheme of things, it doesn't make a whole lot of sense.

The Vermont Cynic: "Letter to the editor: UVM, water you thinking?"

March 22, 2012

http://www.vermontcynic.com/opinion/letter-to-the-editor-uvm-water-you-thinking-1.2719002#.T_r4lvVqQVe

Dear editor,

I was dismayed to learn the other day that VSTEP had finally won the battle to ban bottled water on campus, a classic display of great intentions turned into worst possible outcome.

Don't get me wrong. I do sympathize with the cause — saving the world. It's great. I love it. The best. I'm on board.

But a ban on bottled water? Eh. I'm not so in to it.

Here's why:

First of all, the ban stinks of paternalism. Restrictions made on my freedom for "my own future" make me uneasy, especially when the benefits of those restrictions aren't clearly demonstrated.

Second, the ban will achieve no net reduction in waste. If the idea is to reduce the amount of plastic bottle waste produced on campus, then get rid of all the plastic bottled beverages, not just water. The empty shelf space is going to be filled with other drinks. And guess what? Those drinks come in plastic bottles, too.

Where's the study that links the absence of bottled water on a college campus with fewer bottled beverages consumed overall? I bet VSTEP a Dasani to a Nalgene that it doesn't exist. And if people are going to substitute, what is actually being accomplished?

Third, a ban on bottled water is effectively a promotion of other less healthy bottled drinks. UVM is basically saying that they don't believe in selling drinks that are good for their students on campus, only those that are demonstrably terrible. And a few others, maybe, that aren't as terrible. My last point is a question. What is the first ingredient in almost every other bottled drink besides water? That's right, it's also water!

UVM is banning bottled water, at an enormous expense to its student body, and replacing the bottled water with more bottled water. Except the new bottled water is enhanced with sugar and food coloring. Simply mind blowing.

The way to reduce bottled water consumption is through long-term, grassroots education. And even then, success isn't certain.

A plan hinged on prohibition is a bad idea and won't work to accomplish its intended goals. It just doesn't hold water.

Joe Collier
Class of 2008

Concord, MA & Consumer Access Related

Los Angeles Times: "A misfire in the war over plastic drinking bottles"

September 16, 2012

<http://articles.latimes.com/2012/sep/13/opinion/la-ed-plastic-bottles-ban-concord-20120913>

Woe to the thirsty of Concord, Mass. Under a bylaw born of convoluted reasoning, a person who heads into a store in that town for some hydration will be able to buy a plastic bottle of soda, but not a similar bottle of what dietitians say should be the drink of choice: water.

That's because Concord has become the first city in the United States to ban the sale of serving-size bottled water. It's enough to make New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg , whose proposed ban on the sale of large servings of soda was approved this week, weep.

Yet the two ideas have a lot in common. Both represent sincere attempts to fight social ills. Both also suffer from a lack of consistency (the soda law would allow big servings of other drinks with even more calories) and are an unwelcome interference in the marketplace. Both involve campaigns with national ambitions.

Bottled water owes its popularity to a variety of factors: a misconception that all bottled water is safer or purer than the stuff that flows from the tap; convenience; flavor; concerns about the chlorination or fluoridation of tap water; and marketing. Americans guzzle from 2.5 million plastic bottles an hour, according to Boston University , NASA and other sources; more than 70 percent of those are thrown away rather than recycled. We certainly could be doing better.

Some towns provide recycling bins next to or on top of sidewalk trash cans. Cities that do their own sorting of household trash glean more recyclables than those that depend on residents to do the job. Well-maintained public drinking fountains and vending machines that dispense single servings of cold, filtered water would encourage more reuse of bottles. Bigger deposits on bottles would help.

But Concord's new bylaw is unnecessarily intrusive and problematically inconsistent. A plastic bottle that holds soda is no less damaging to the environment than one that holds water. Why force a convenience-seeking customer who forgot his reusable bottle to choose a less-healthy option? This isn't a policy we'd like to see travel cross-country.

Boston Herald: "Concord's costly bylaw"

September 10, 2012

<http://news.bostonherald.com/news/opinion/editorials/view.bg?articleid=1061159169&format=comments#CommentsArea>

Concord residents are out of luck if they want to buy a bottle of water to go with their meatball sub. But now they may have the added insult of seeing their tax dollars wasted to defend a lawsuit over the ridiculous town bylaw that bans the sale of bottled water in plastic containers smaller than one liter.

The International Bottled Water Association, which represents bottlers, distributors and suppliers, is “exploring all available options to continue to oppose the [Concord] bylaw,” the Herald reported on Thursday. The ban is scheduled to take effect Jan. 1.

But that’s just fine with Concord resident and anti-bottled-water zealot Jean Hill, who seems to think it would be a badge of honor for the town to be sued.

“They’ll threaten to sue, and they may even sue but. . . it won’t do them any good,” said Hill, who apparently has insight into the civil claims process that the average citizen does not. “Actually it will give them a worse name than they already have.”

Goodness — a worse name!

That and tens of thousands of dollars in revenue from property taxes — dollars that might otherwise be spent on schools, playgrounds or a new fire engine — might begin to pay the legal bills for this arrogant bit of green folly.

Of course the people of Concord are the ones who approved the bylaw in the first place (by a mere 39 votes, after three attempts), so if they are content to see their tax dollars go to line the pockets of lawyers, that is their very expensive problem.

Boston Globe: “Concord bottled water ban would cap freedom of choice”

April 3, 2012

http://www.boston.com/yourtown/news/concord/2012/04/opinion_concord_bottled_water.html?comments=all#readerComm

Concord has long been hailed the birthplace of liberty in America; a state holiday, Patriots’ Day, celebrates the history of Paul Revere’s ride and the minutemen’s first stand against the British in 1775 each year in the historic town. And yet among this culture of embracing freedom, a misguided campaign threatens one of our most basic civil liberties: consumer choice.

This is the third consecutive year of debate on banning the sale of bottled water in the Town of Concord. The proposal was defeated by Town residents last year and a similar attempt was struck down by Attorney General Coakley two years ago. Proponents of the ban will tell you bottled water is wasteful and harmful to the environment, and banning its sale will reduce unnecessary waste. Unfortunately, this over-reaching measure is returning for a Town vote without proponents considering some important long-term implications. As a concerned parent and resident of Concord, I want to bring some of these concerns to light.

First and foremost, this ban is un-American and a very clear example of government control of commerce. It is not each and every individual town government’s role to decide what products, deemed safe for consumption by the FDA, are available for purchase. If we allow special interest groups to

dictate such aspects of our free-market economy, what product is next on the chopping block? Prohibition is heavy handed and goes too far. If you don't like the idea of bottled water, don't buy it.

Armed with boatloads of wishful thinking, proponents of the ban have offered absolutely no evidence that this would alleviate the waste they seek to address. Neither environmental nor economic impact studies have been done on this issue. What we do know is that Concord is environmentally conscious already, with a recycling rate in the top 13% in Massachusetts, according to a presentation by Concord Public Works in 2010. That rate continues to improve and reflects a strong culture of personal responsibility in the Town.

As well intentioned as it is, this fanciful idea that banning bottled water's sale will wipe out its existence in Concord also excludes the many people seeking bottled water who will drive to stores outside of Concord, burning more fossil fuels and going against the "Keep it local!" message supported by so many environmentalists.

Banning the sale of a safe, legal product puts retailers within town limits at a competitive disadvantage. Customers like the taste, healthiness and convenience of bottled water and will go elsewhere to find it. They will inevitably buy other items outside of Concord, hurting local businesses. It is short-sighted to ignore economic considerations.

Proponents of the ban also ignore how much proposed "filling stations" for reusable bottles will cost the Town. The National Park Service just spent \$290,000 installing 10 filling stations in Grand Canyon National Park. Will a similar burden befall Concord tax payers, who would simultaneously lose sales taxes that once contributed to our tax base?

What's more, this limitation of consumer choice takes the most healthy beverage option off store shelves in a time where we face obesity and diabetes epidemics nationwide. Having raised five children, I cringe at the idea of school children being forced to drink sugar-laden drinks such as soda and juice because of restricted choices.

Other beverage options also typically come in more plastic-intensive packaging. The bottled water industry is a known leader in "lightweighting," or designing products that use less material to achieve the same purpose, and yet we are singling this product out for ostensibly environmental reasons. Plastic packaging is here to stay; Concord residents' time, and our Town resources, would be better spent on education and promotion of recycling programs.

Last, but not least, don't forget about disaster preparedness. You may recall the water main break in Boston less than two years ago that left nearly 2 million Massachusetts residents without potable drinking water. The bottled water industry responded with lightning speed to deliver free, donated water. What message of appreciation does this send? Will bottled water be so easy to acquire if it is banned in town?

Though the proposed ban cites a carve-out for emergency situations, I have little confidence in the Town's ability to handle such a situation and can only imagine the enormous expense of such a wasteful exercise.

Enough is enough. This ban is not an appropriate avenue for attaining sustainability and infringes on our rights. When this issue comes to a vote in April, I hope each resident of Concord will come show their support for basic civil liberties and common sense, and vote against the ban on bottled water.

Concord Monitor: "A Drop Less Freedom"

April 15, 2012

<http://www.concordmonitor.com/print/323653?CSAuthResp=1341848563%3Aagmfp6shs75ot405fr48t6p9546%3ACsUserId|CSGroupId%3Aapproved%3A459B3BF2039C111B7A88ACB2D66C413F&CSUserId=94&CSGroupId=1>

Nothing seems to anger the modern environmentalist more than an empty plastic water bottle. You'd think our otherwise empty landfills were overflowing with Poland Spring and Dasani litter, and you might as well strangle a sea turtle with your bare hands as open an Aquafina. Last week, Phillips Exeter Academy joined the anti-bottled water movement, blocking its sale on campus. Exeter joins Harvard, the University of Vermont and growing list of other cloistered campuses in taking a symbolic stand against a product that more than half of all Americans buy.

According to the New Hampshire Union Leader, the University of New Hampshire's Ecosystem Task Force has installed 40 hydration stations across campus, while Dartmouth College officials are trying to reduce student demand for bottled water. UC Berkeley opted against a ban after concluding that students would simply buy iced tea and soda if they couldn't buy bottled water.

According to the ban-the-bottle campaign, buying a clean, cold bottle of water whenever you want is a wasteful extravagance. But so is most of modern life. We don't need most of our modern conveniences any more than we need a beverage we could have brought from home.

Bottled water opponents miss the point. Sure, we can get the water for almost nothing, but we're not really buying the water. We're buying the bottle. We're paying someone else to store and refrigerate our water, which we can pick up when we're thirsty. We're purchasing a portable and disposable container instead of worrying about packing, cleaning and refilling it.

Are plastic water bottles really that bad for the planet? Aren't they dwarfed by thousands of other beverages containers and food packages? Are Vitamin Water, Sprite, and Mountain Dew drinkers just as irresponsible in their choices? How many gallons of water and tons of coal do we use washing Nalgene bottles?

According to the ban-the-bottle campaign, non-recycled water bottles account for 3 billion pounds of solid waste each year, which sounds like a lot. The EPA calculates that the U.S. generates 254 million tons of solid waste each year, 12 percent of which is plastic. If every plastic water bottle in the country ceased to exist, we'd cut the amount of plastic waste by less than 1/2 of 1 percent. Casting water bottles as an unmitigated ecological menace is just silly.

I'll readily admit that we should recycle more of our plastic bottles. There's no better way to reduce waste than to turn it into an input for another product, and that's certainly preferable to blocking their sale. Every choice we make has a cost. Half of all Americans think there's value in buying bottled water. I shouldn't be able to stop them from buying products that I find it overly extravagant.

Richmond Review (BC, Canada): “My Right to Drink Bottled Water”

April 12, 2012

<http://www.richmondreview.com/opinion/letters/147248735.html>

There comes a point in time when the big picture should include everyone and not just a select few.

Let’s consider that water is critical to our health. Let’s consider that for years now, we have been bombarded with the importance of replacing pop and other sugary drinks in refreshment machines with bottled water. Why? Because in order to improve the health of every man, woman and child in Richmond—they need to drink as much water as possible as often as possible.

Now, after that hard won message and change has permeated throughout Richmond schools, community centres, and municipal buildings—there is now a fight to remove access to bottled water?

I know a lot of people who simply will not drink tap water and I know many more who do walk around with an empty container everywhere they go. Think about the kids on hockey and soccer fields who rely on their coaches to have coolers filled with bottled water. Think about busy people who stop off to work out on the way home and depend on the ability to grab a bottle of water at the community centre before exercising. And think about the vast number of people who no longer having access to bottled water in municipal vending machines simply switch back to sugary drinks. Not only that, bottled water tastes significantly better than Richmond’s tap water to many people. Why don’t those of you who are attempting to take away my easy access to the water I prefer to drink, explain to me why you feel obliged to impinge upon my right to choose the best beverage for my health wherever I am?

And while you are at it, why don’t you tell me exactly what is in tap water before you insist that I must drink it?

Denise Tester
Richmond