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Dear Mr. Erbenraut and Mr. Hallman,

Thank you for writing about important issues concerning bottled water in your August 22, 2016, article *"Here's Another Reason To Be Worried About Bottled Water,"* published on [HuffingtonPost.com](http://HuffingtonPost.com). I am contacting you to clarify and provide some additional information about several points raised in this story.

The claim that the bottling of water is a privatization of a public good is both false and misleading. Bottled water is a packaged food product that does not compete with tap water. Rather, as Americans make healthier dietary and lifestyle choices, bottled water's gains have clearly come at the expense of sugary soft drinks. When making claims about water use and privatization, why not also acknowledge that it takes vastly more water to make other beverage products, such as beer and soda? ([See this graphic](#): Soda uses 2.02 liters of water to produce 1 liter of soda, beer uses 3.8 liters of water to produce 1 liter of beer, and bottled water uses just 1.32 liters of water to make 1 liter, including the contents. This same graphic also shows that bottled water is an "insignificant" water user; according to the U.S. Geological Survey, with data from the Beverage Marketing Corporation (BMC), bottled water uses just 0.011 percent of all water used in the U.S.)

The bottled water industry supports a strong public water system, which is important for providing Americans with clean and safe drinking water. In fact, many bottled water companies use public water sources for their purified bottled water products. To claim that the availability of bottled water in the marketplace somehow affects the infrastructure, funding, development, and maintenance of municipal water systems makes no sense and is completely unfounded.

The bottled water industry actively promotes choosing water – tap, filtered, and bottled – as the first choice for thirst. The International Bottled Water Association's (IBWA) website states: "So, if you want to eliminate or moderate calories, sugar, caffeine, artificial flavors or colors, and other ingredients from your diet, choosing water is a right decision." The industry has also produced numerous water drinking promotional materials such as this one: ["What you drink is a bigger deal than you might think."](#)

As noted above, bottled water competes with other convenience drinks such as soft drinks, sports drinks, teas, and juices. Data from BMC backs up this assertion, stating: “Americans increased their annual consumption by more than 11 gallons, from 25.4 gallons per person in 2005 to 36.5 gallons a decade later. During the same period, per capita consumption of carbonated soft drinks dropped by 12.4 gallons. Per capita consumption of other major beverage categories, like milk and fruit beverages, also fell.” Read more [here](#). The trend of consumers choosing bottled water over soft drinks is not the result of some conspiratorial industry manipulation or gullible consumers. The fact is that it’s a consumer-driven movement focused on healthier dietary and lifestyle choices.

It is irresponsible and not in the public interest to discourage consumers from drinking bottled water. There is growing evidence that when water is not available, people are more likely to turn to less healthy sugary beverages. Research published in the *American Journal of Public Health* (AJPH) has shown that efforts to ban or restrict the sale of bottled can actually lead to increased consumption of less healthy beverages and plastic waste. The study, “[The Unintended Consequences of Changes in Beverage Options and the Removal of Bottled Water on a University Campus](#),” concluded that the bottled water sales ban at the University of Vermont (UVM) resulted in a significant increase (33 percent) in the consumption of sugary drinks and an increase (6 percent) in the amount of plastic bottles entering the waste stream. This [new article](#) discusses how people visiting Concord, Massachusetts, are similarly quenching their thirst during a bottled water sales ban.

It is also not accurate to say that bottled water containers generate an incredible amount of waste. Bottled water containers are 100 percent recyclable, and as an industry, we support strong community recycling initiatives and recognize that a continued focus on increased recycling is important for everyone. We are always looking for ways to strengthen existing programs and help to expand recycling efforts ever further. However, even when they are not properly recycled, bottled water bottles make up only 3.3 percent of all drink packaging in U.S. landfills. Glass containers make up 66.7 percent, soda containers make up 13.3 percent and aluminum cans make up 7.9 percent. See this [drink packaging in U.S. landfills infographic](#).

It’s important to also note that most bottled water companies are actually small family owned businesses, not just Coke and Pepsi, which are mentioned frequently in your article.

Thank you for reading and giving my concerns your attention. I respectfully request that you update the story and provide your readers with a more complete picture of bottled water. 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,

Chris Hogan  
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International Bottled Water Association