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GROUPS KICK OFF CAMPAIGN TO UPDATE BOTTLE BILL

For Immediate Release, Boston - A statewide network of environmental, consumer, and civic groups launched their "New Year's Resolution Campaign for an Updated Bottle Bill" today in Boston.

The Massachusetts Bottle Bill celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2003. The bottle bill has done more to control litter and spur recycling in Massachusetts than any other state or local program. Since 1990, more than 21 *billion* bottles and cans bearing a 5-cent deposit have been returned and recycled through the bottle bill.

But the bottle bill needs to be brought up to date to meet the state's current and future needs. To update the state bottle bill, Rep. Douglas Petersen (D-Lynn) filed HD3689, which would improve the Massachusetts Bottle Bill in two significant ways:

It would add water, sports drinks, teas, juices, wine and liquor bottles to the bottle bill – beverages that barely existed when the original bill was enacted over 20 years ago.

It would raise over \$16 million in additional state revenue from projected unclaimed deposits.

"Governor Romney has been very supportive of updating the bottle bill. In both 2003 and 2004, he proposed updates that would have almost a billion containers and expanded state revenue, said Rep. Douglas Petersen (D-Marblehead). "I believe that the strong support that the proposal has received will enable us to pass the update this session."

The Massachusetts Bottle Bill has not been updated since its implementation in 1983 - except for increasing the handling fee for recycling centers and redirecting the unclaimed deposit's windfall profits to the state. The last major push for updating the bottle bill was in 1997 - when the bill failed despite overwhelming public support.

"New leadership in the House and a new legislative session provide a great opportunity to take long overdue action on this bill," said Janet Domenitz, MASSPIRG's Executive Director. It's hard to get more win/win than this bill -- increase recycling, bring needed revenue to state coffers, and get rid of more container litter.

"Boosting recycling rates means fewer containers will be land-filled or incinerated, more natural resources will be conserved, energy will be saved and greenhouse gases reduced. The bottle bill already has diverted about 2 million tons from the waste stream over the past 20 years," said James McCaffrey, the director of the Massachusetts Sierra Club.

An increasing number of containers are finding their way to landfills, due to changing consumer habits: people are drinking more "new age" beverages (such as iced tea, fruit juice, and bottled water), and they are drinking them away from home--and away from the convenience of their curbside



recycling bins. As a result, an estimated 90,000 tons of beverage containers are now disposed of as garbage annually, instead of being recycled through the Massachusetts deposit system.

The deposit system recovers 69% of all carbonated beverages sold in the Commonwealth. Local curbside recycling programs recover an estimated 10% more. Only 20% of the containers sold in Massachusetts end up in a landfill or incinerator, or as litter. In contrast, states without deposit systems recycle about 22% of the containers sold. The industry-financed collection mechanism established through the bottle bill also reduces the collection burden on local, taxpayer-funded curbside programs.

Finally, unclaimed deposits have traditionally provided critical funding for many state recycling and environmental programs. The bottle bill currently brings the state over \$33 million in annual revenue from unclaimed deposits. Under the update, an additional \$16 million would be added to state revenue.

"The Bottle Bill is one of our most effective tools for decreasing litter, increasing recycling, and creating cleaner communities," said Rep. Alice Wolf (D-Cambridge), a co-sponsor of the bill. "During these difficult fiscal times, it would provide incentives to local communities for recycling and added revenue for the Commonwealth. It is sound environmental and fiscal policy, updating it makes good common sense."

Last year, a similar measure drew huge public support. Over 40 environmental groups, recycling companies and redemption centers endorsed the update. According to Jennifer Gitlitz of the Container Recycling Institute, "Twenty years ago, iced tea, sports drinks, and bottled water were barely a blip on the radar screen; now they account for over 25 billion trashed containers in the United States each year. Maine, Hawaii and California have already incorporated these drinks into their deposit laws. By updating its bottle bill, Massachusetts will set an important example for other states."

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