

An easy step to help the environment:

Think before you buy plastic water bottles

Some quick facts about Connecticut and water:

- ◆ Because of Connecticut's regulatory diligence, and ongoing investments in clean water, we are one of the top five states in the U.S. for the quality of our drinking water.
- ◆ Connecticut residents purchase over 425 million water bottles per year.
- ◆ 40% of all bottled water is simply tap water.
- ◆ 60-70% of all bottled water is exempt from water safety standards.
- ◆ While the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulates the quality of public water supplies, the agency has no authority over bottled water.
- ◆ You can save money and help the environment by drinking tap water.

Why is it important for us to reduce the use of plastic water bottles and increase the use of tap water?

- ◆ A plastic water bottle takes over 1000 years to decompose in a landfill.
- ◆ 80% of plastic water bottles end up in landfills (only 20% are recycled).
- ◆ The energy cost in the lifecycle of a bottle of water is equivalent, on average, to filling up a quarter of each bottle with oil.



How do we in the U.S. compare? We only recycle 32% of our trash, piling in comparison to most of Europe, which recycles 60%, and particularly Switzerland, which recycles 89%.

Representative Betsy Ritter • Representing Waterford & Montville



Elizabeth 'Betsy' Ritter
State Representative

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State Representative

Elizabeth 'Betsy' Ritter

Recycling & Reducing Our Environmental Impact

38th District
Waterford & Montville

How You Can Help

What can I do in my personal life to help conserve the environment?

☛ Don't throw away your glass, plastic, paper, and metal. Rinse it, then place into recycling containers.

☛ Ask your employer to help you recycle at work. Place recycling bins near printers and in cafeterias.



☛ Bring canvas bags with you on shopping trips.

☛ Recycle your old plastic bags at grocery stores that send bags to environmental recycling centers where they are turned into decking products.



☛ Use a clothesline vs. a dryer and save \$100 a year.

☛ Bring a travel mug from home to a coffee shop.

☛ Styrofoam plates, cups, and plastic utensils consume more energy to make than does cleaning reusable dishes.

☛ If possible, compost your food to cut down on waste.



☛ Switch from conventional light bulbs to compact fluorescent to reduce energy consumption and save money.

☛ Turn your thermostat down two degrees when you are asleep or not home. It reduces energy consumption and saves money.

☛ Turn lights off when you aren't in the room.



Why should I recycle?

◇ We are running out of space for trash. Dumps are filling up and closing at a rate of one per day. While we had 18,500 dumps in 1979, we have less than 2,000 today.

◇ The dumps that are open pose problems for the environment. Almost 82% of all landfills leak, despite EPA guidelines requiring protective liners to prevent liquids from leaching into the ground, making them a constant threat to our environment. In addition, their foul smell and unsightly appearance make them unpopular in communities.



◇ Even in dumps monitored properly, decomposition rates of glass, plastic, and metal are very slow. Plastic only breaks down when exposed to UV light, while metal can be oxidized if exposed to air, which are both unlikely to occur in a dump. Glass, on the other hand, does not decompose and must be crushed to dust or sand.

◇ When glass, plastic, paper, and metal are thrown into dumps these resources cannot be reused, requiring manufacturers to consume more natural resources. Deforestation reduces the earth's capacity to produce oxygen and absorb carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas.

◇ By reducing our environmental impact, we will decrease smog, acid rain, and water contamination.

◇ Recycling directly decreases our energy consumption.

◇ Recycling aluminum to make new cans uses 95% less energy.

◇ Throwing out an aluminum can wastes as much energy as if it were half full of gasoline.

◇ Recycling plastics decrease energy consumption by 75%.

◇ Recycling paper and glass decrease energy consumption, by 30-40%.

◇ Recycling makes sense economically: The *Waste and Resources Action Program* tracked the lifecycle of recyclable materials and found that, in 83% of the cases, recycling was more cost-efficient than throwing the materials out with the trash.



Informative and Useful Web Links:

- » **Reduce junk mail:** Go to www.ProQuo.com
- » **EPA Report:** Municipal Solid Waste in the U.S. www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/muncpl/msw99.htm
- » **BYO Water, National Geographic Green Guide:** www.thegreenguide.com/blog/tow/282

