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October 13, 2010

Multnomah County Board of Commissioners  
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Members of the Board:

Bottled water has become a topic of interest and debate across the United States.

As an outgrowth of this ongoing dialogue, some interest groups have advocated that states, counties or municipalities no longer provide bottled water products for their employees or at public events. Since such a proposal has made it to your desk, I hope to take a moment of your time to provide some information from a viewpoint that you may not yet have heard from.

Many of the claims being made against bottled water by industry critics provide an incomplete picture the environmental impact of water and other beverages, and the importance of bottled water as a contributor to a healthy lifestyle. There are two examples in Resolution R-15 that I'd like to highlight.

- The resolution states that the average price for bottled water is \$1.50 per 16-ounce bottle. That would make a case of water cost \$36.00, when in reality most bottled water is sold in half-liter (16.9 oz) cases of 24 bottles, at about \$3.99 per case. That puts the figure at about 17 cents per bottle, not \$1.50.
- The resolution also states that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) mandates six water quality tests per month for bottled water, adding that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) mandates over 300 tests per month for public drinking water systems, and has "far more stringent" requirements for public drinking water systems. This might convey the impression that bottled water is not as regulated as stringently as tap water, when in fact, federal law requires FDA regulations for bottled water be at least as protective as those imposed by the EPA for municipal drinking water. In fact, federal regulations for bottled water are stronger than those for tap water for contaminants such as coliform bacteria, E. coli, and lead. And insofar as testing goes, Nestlé Waters North America tests each of our bottling lines 200 times *per day* to ensure that we meet FDA standards.

The most important point I'd like to highlight for you, however, is that stopping the purchase of bottled water does not address the challenges most activists speak of by demanding such a measure. Purchase bans do not improve water conservation practices, do not ensure adequate funding for public drinking water systems, and do not increase recycling rates—particularly in a state like Oregon, where water bottles are included in your bottle deposit law. Instead, these purchase bans succeed in removing one of the most healthful beverage choices and replacing it with less healthy options that use more plastic and more water to make than bottled water.

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In February 2010, my company commissioned a peer-reviewed life cycle analysis (LCA) of all beverages. This LCA, published at [www.beveragelcafootprint.com](http://www.beveragelcafootprint.com), revealed the following:

- Tap water has the lightest environmental footprint of all beverages.
- Bottled water has the lightest environmental footprint of all *packaged* beverages—one that can be reduced by 25% simply by recycling the bottle.
- Removing bottled water as a packaged beverage option is the wrong move for the environment and for health. This is because if bottled water is not available as a beverage option, only one-third of people will turn to tap water, and *two-thirds will choose other packaged beverages with heavier environmental footprints than a bottle of water.* (This research appears on page 20 of the LCA.)
- The City of Toronto, Canada ultimately decided not to remove bottled water from its schools after testing and confirming that students turned more to sweetened drinks than to tap water. James Reffle, the director of Environmental Health and Chronic Disease Prevention Services said, "If bottled water is not available, and access to municipal drinking water fountains is limited, then the public may opt for other drinks with higher levels of sugar, no nutritive value and a high acid content."

Highlights on these points are included in the attached "LCA Information Sheet," and specifics can be found for review at your convenience at [www.beveragelcafootprint.com](http://www.beveragelcafootprint.com). I have also included a recent op-ed piece from the *Boston Globe*, entitled "Bottled Water: The Wrong Enemy," written by former Boston City Councilor Tom Keane. I hope you will find them to be useful, and that you will weigh them with the other information you have received on the issues surrounding this debate.

***Bottled water is a complement to tap water, and a competitor to other packaged drinks.*** It would be negligent of me to suggest that there is only one acceptable manner to access clean drinking water, and neglectful for anyone to suggest to you that the only way to take back tap water is to take bottled water off the table.

Thank you for your time and careful consideration. I welcome the opportunity to have a deeper conversation with you or the appropriate member of your staff. I can be reached at (203) 863-0125, or via e-mail at [brian.flaherty@waters.nestle.com](mailto:brian.flaherty@waters.nestle.com).

Sincerely,



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