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Canaan Selectmen Support Bottle Bill

By **KAREN BARTOMIOLI**
Staff Reporter

CANAAN—Does anyone remember when consumers first started paying an extra nickel for every can or bottle of soda?

Well, Connecticut's "Bottle Bill" turns 25 this year. Since 1978, those nickels have added up to millions of dollars. But not all of it has found its way back into the original pockets.

It seems not everyone embraced the plan to encourage recycling of all that aluminum, plastic and glass. Between 22 and 30 million returnables are tossed into the trash each year in the state. Millions more are recycled, the heck with deposits.

Over the years, unclaimed bottle deposits have amounted to more than \$16 million, money bottlers and distributors were allowed to keep to "help soften the blow of the new law," according to Michael Pace, Old Saybrook first selectman. Pace is also chairman

of the Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority (CRRRA) board of directors, which has introduced a bill before the Connecticut General Assembly.

Environment Committee and calls for \$16.4 million in unclaimed bottle deposits to go to all 169 cities and towns to support recycling efforts.

Canaan's Board of Selectmen agrees with it.

That was then, this is now.

Once, those bottles and cans were thrown in municipal dumps. But in the 1990s, the state forced towns to close their landfills, open transfer stations and bear the burden of paying to have garbage hauled away and burned. Now, a soda can in the garbage not only means a nickel lost, but a cost to the town that pays for its removal.

In a letter to towns, Pace said what amounts to subsidies to the beverage industry should not continue. Rather, the unclaimed nickels should go to towns in the form of relief. He is

urging towns to call legislators and "tell them the Bottle Bill's goal of environmental protection is better served by supporting recycling than by padding the beverage industry's bottom line."

Canaan is one of many towns that sends its municipal solid waste, as it is technically called, to CRRRA. While a figure specific to Canaan was not provided, Pace listed several recycling projects around the state where that relief would be worth from \$6.20 to \$9 per ton in tipping fees (the term used to described the fee paid to CRRRA).

Canaan budgeted \$53,900 this year to have its garbage processed. Then there is another \$28,000 to have it hauled away. That adds up to 4 percent of the selectmen's budget.

The Board of Selectmen voted unanimously Monday night to lend its support to HB 6044, as requested by Pace, who noted also its importance in a year when state aid to towns will be cut.