

## Letter to the Administration Regarding Bottled Water



**Proposed Motions:** Approve the letter to be sent to President Shepard and Senior Vice President Coughlin regarding bottled water on behalf of the student body.

**Sponsor:** AS Vice President for Student Life

**Persons of Contact:** VP Student Life, Katie Savinski; AS President, Ethan Glemaker; Students for Sustainable Water Representatives, Carolyn Bowie, Sara Purington, and Michelle Dannehy

**Date:** 2 May, 2013

### **Request:**

To approve a letter to be sent to President Shepard and Senior Vice President Coughlin regarding bottled water on behalf of the student body requesting that we establish a clear timeline for moving forward with current efforts.

### **Rationale:**

Over the past year, the Associated Students and Students for Sustainable (SSW) water have made immense progress in raising awareness about the detriment of single-use bottled water. The AS has implemented policy disallowing the distribution on bottled water at events, and working in tandem with the SSW, the AS has reached out to colleges and departments asking them to sign a water bottle free pledge in support of the 2012 AS Initiative to ban the sale and distribution of bottled water on campus. This letter is intended to be a clear recommendation from the AS Board of Directors to the University administration to create a committee with the explicit task of addressing the issue of bottled water on campus and coming up with a recommendation for moving away from the sale and distribution. It is important to us to follow the correct processes and ensure that all stakeholders who receive funding from Cold Beverage Contract dollars have the opportunity to weigh in.



## Associated Students

Associated Students Board of Directors  
516 High Street, Bellingham, WA 98225

Viking Union 504  
360.650.3460

2 May, 2013

President Shepard and Senior Vice President Coughlin,

The campaign to reduce consumption of single-use bottled water at Western Washington University is about to enter its third year of student work and organizing. Through much effort and passion, the Associated Student club Students for Sustainable Water (SSW) has spread awareness of bottled water and water privatization as a detriment to the environment, human health, and an offense to the fundamental human right to water. Simultaneously, we emphasize supporting our local, municipal water from Lake Whatcom as Western's clean, safe source of tap water.

We, as the Associated Students of Western Washington University are passionate about furthering sustainability efforts on campus. We are writing to strongly urge that the administration of Western Washington University move forward in developing a plan to end the sale of bottled water on campus in the next year.

### Proposal

We propose to create and implement a lasting plan to: (1) end university-funded distribution of single-use bottled water; and (2) remove bottled water from all markets, vending machines, and other venues across campus. In addition, we advocate that the University, in collaboration with the Associated Students, encourages awareness of the issue and expands alternatives to bottled water. We suggest the following actions to facilitate progress toward the achievement of these goals:

- Adopt a timeline to facilitate the transition to a bottled water free campus (see Appendix I for a proposed timeline); and
- Create an administrative or representative committee to address and overcome challenges.

### Supporting Reasons

- Student Body Support:
  - The student ballot for Spring 2012 showed 73% of students support the bottled water initiative (see Appendix II). This support demonstrates student demand to reduce bottled water consumption, and support alternative solutions to the sale of bottled water on campus.
  - The Associated Students have implemented a Bottled Water Free Initiative (section B of the AS Hospitality Policy) as of December 5, 2012, making the AS the first organization on campus to eliminate the usage and distribution of bottled water.
  - Many student clubs support efforts to implement alternatives to bottled water (see Appendix III).
- Staff and Faculty Support:

- Through the joint effort of the AS Board of Directors and SSW, students have met with the dean of each college on campus to ask their support in signing a Bottled Water Free Pledge. We have received encouragement and enthusiasm across campus; Huxley College of the Environment and Fairhaven College of Interdisciplinary Studies have already signed the pledge. Nearly every dean is requesting the signatures of the department chairs within their college in order to increase awareness, catalyze conversation, and generate united support.
- Success with current water bottle refilling stations:
  - As of April 2013, roughly one year after installation, the three hydration stations funded by WWU's Green Energy Fee have recorded over 150,000 uses (Arntzen: 30,465, Wade King Recreation Center: 102,644, Old Main: 23,042). In other words, over 150,000 disposable bottled water containers have been saved from downgrade recycling or landfill disposal from Western.
  - Capacity for water bottle refill stations will increase in 2013 with the installation of another station in the Wilson Library using Green Energy Fee funding (proposed and planned by Carolyn Bowie and Gerald Kitsis from SSW).
- This initiative supports WWU's Climate Action Plan to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. Bottled water is responsible for more than 200 times the life-cycle greenhouse gas emissions of tap water, taking into account water extraction, treatment, bottling, and distribution, according to the Swiss Gas and Water Association.
- Evidence of a national movement away from bottled water:
  - Over 15 colleges and universities across the United States have ended the sale and distribution of bottled water completely (including Evergreen State College and Seattle University in Washington).
  - Over 50 colleges and universities have campaigns to reduce or eliminate Bottled Water on campus, and the number is growing.
  - As of January 1st, the town of Concord, Massachusetts is the first municipality in the U.S. to ban bottled water sales.

Ending the sale and distribution of single-use bottled water at WWU is highly encouraged and supported by the campus community. This initiative is a necessary step Western must take to confirm its values as an environmental steward and as an advocate for basic human rights. The most readily foreseen obstacle for this initiative lies in the profit loss within the Cold Beverage Contract, of which bottled water sales make up roughly 10% from 2012 (a decrease from 11% in 2011). Although this should be taken into consideration, the external costs from production and disposal of this commodity, along with the ethical importance of this decision clearly illustrate the right choice for Western to take.

Carolyn Bowie, a student from the Students from Sustainable Water Club noted: "When I tell my friends and family about the incredible opportunities and experiences I have at Western, I glow with pride and adoration. I am proud to be a part of some of WWU's achievements in sustainability, and I look forward to the great accomplishments this university will make in the future."

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

The Associated Students of Western Washington University

## Appendix I: Proposed Timeline

- ✓ Spring 2012 – Bottled Water Initiative passes with 73% student support on AS ballot
- ✓ December 2012 – AS Board of Directors adopts bottled water free policy
- ✓ Winter 2013 – AS Board of Directors and Students for Sustainable Water meet with college deans to sign bottled water free pledge. Fairhaven College and Huxley College of the Environment are the first to sign on.
- Spring 2013 – All colleges of Western sign the bottled water free pledge
- Spring 2013 – The administration of Western forms a committee to assess challenges and formulate an implementation plan of ending bottled water sales and distribution. This committee will include representation from university dining, Walton Beverages (or Western designee), the Associated Students, a representative from ESS, and a student at large. After initial meetings, the membership may be expanded to include relevant stakeholders who receive funding from the CBC.
- Academic Year 2013-2014 – Western Washington University officially eliminates the sale and distribution of bottled water from all events, vending machines, and markets on campus.

## Appendix II: Water Bottle Initiative Language

Associated Students of Western Washington University, 2012 Elections

Official wording and results of the bottled water initiative:

Shall we the students of Western Washington University find the selling of bottled water to be an unsustainable practice and strongly urge the university to take action to discontinue the sales and distribution of bottled water on campus?

Results: 73% voted in favor of this initiative

## Appendix III: Club Endorsements

The following clubs have officially endorsed efforts to implement alternatives to bottled water at Western Washington University:

Students for Sustainable Water, Students for Sustainable Food, Students for Renewable Energy, NWS Chapter of Surfrider Foundation, The Associated Students Environmental Center, Emerging Green Builders, Read the Dirt, Eco-somatics, LEAD, Western Action Coalition, WWU Birders Society, Hillel

## Appendix IV: AS Hospitality Policy

### B. WATER BOTTLE FREE INITIATIVE

1. With respect to the Water Bottle Free Initiative passed in the spring of 2012, the Associated Students shall put forth a best faith effort to eliminate the usage and distribution of plastic single-use water bottles. This policy applies to all AS offices and clubs, and includes a best faith effort to provide acceptable alternatives to bottled water. Pertinent directors or professional staff will make exceptions when safety and necessity require such usage of water bottles.