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N.G.A. OPPOSES COSTLY, INEFFECTIVE NATIONWIDE BOTTLE DEPOSIT BILL

WASHINGTON, DC (July 10, 2002) – The National Grocers Association (N.G.A.) today strongly opposed the imposition of a mandatory bottle deposit system on American consumers because it would undermine local recycling efforts and compromise food safety by directing consumers to bring dirty beverage containers to their neighborhood grocery stores.

N.G.A. urged members of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee to oppose S. 2220, the National Beverage Container Reuse and Recycling Act, which would impose a 10-cent refund on most beverage containers, and create a significant sanitation hazard for retail and wholesale grocers nationwide, who would have to store, sort, and handle dirty returned beverage containers.

“Consumers have overwhelmingly chosen the convenience of curbside recycling over deposit systems,” said Tom Wenning, Senior Vice President and General Counsel for N.G.A. “Today, nearly 60 percent of all Americans have access to curbside recycling in more than 9,800 communities. Meanwhile, only ten states have container deposit laws, and no state that has adopted a comprehensive solid waste management program has ever found it necessary to add a deposit program.

N.G.A. strongly supports comprehensive recycling programs to address the challenges posed by solid waste disposal, Wenning said. Imposing a nationwide deposit system would undermine community recycling efforts by diverting potential revenues, particularly the proceeds from the sale of aluminum cans, which help offset the costs of operating curbside recycling programs.

“In addition, consumers who choose to recycle effectively forfeit their deposit when they recycle beverage containers through their curbside programs,” Wenning added. “That makes this bill, effectively, a 10-cents-per-container tax on people who choose to recycle at curbside rather than take their containers to their neighborhood grocery store.”

N.G.A. is the national trade association representing the retail and wholesale grocers that comprise the independent sector of the food distribution industry. An independent retailer is a privately owned or controlled food retail company operating in a variety of formats. Some are publicly traded but with controlling shares held by the family. Most independent operators are serviced by wholesale distributors, while others may be partially or fully self-distributing. Independents are the true “entrepreneurs” of the grocery industry and dedicated to their customers, associates, and communities. N.G.A. members include retail and wholesale grocers and their state associations, as well as manufacturers and service suppliers.