

Bottled Water-Free Northwestern April 1, 2015

Whereas, it is part of the University's mission to "Contribute to the solutions for renewable energy and a sustainable environment and to how public policies and economic incentives promote implementation of new technologies and practices" (Northwestern University Strategic Plan 2011);

Whereas, the Northwestern University "We Will" campaign will "help realize [the] transformative strategic plan," referenced above (Northwestern News);

Whereas, the "We Will" campaign "is an invitation to the Northwestern community to join together to solve society's most critical challenges" (We Will Case Statement);

Whereas, "As one of the world's leading academic institutions, Northwestern University recognizes its role in addressing the global challenges of sustainability and climate change" (Northwestern Office of Sustainability);

Whereas, "Reducing waste and increasing our diversion rate are an important part of our campus sustainability efforts" (Northwestern Facilities Management);

Whereas, Northwestern Facilities Management includes among its organizational values a commitment to stewardship and environmental responsibility;

Whereas, the reduction of plastic waste on Northwestern's campus fits into the missions and values above;

Whereas, the sale of bottled water on Northwestern's campus contributes negatively to our overall environmental impact;

Whereas, although plastic waste reduction is not limited to bottled water, eliminating the sale of bottled water on campus is a feasible and responsible step in the reduction process:

- The manufacturing, distribution, and disposal of bottled water have both environmental and human rights repercussions, as detailed below;
- There are suitable alternatives to bottled water in the form of water fountains, tap water, and reusable water bottles;

Whereas, bottled water produces environmental damages:

- Americans purchase a total of 31.2 billion liters of bottled water annually, which is equivalent to 65,937,500,000 sixteen-ounce water bottles. This requires nearly 900,000 tons of plastic (Pacific Institute);
- Only 29% of plastic bottles are recycled in the United States. Much of the remaining bottles end up in landfills and the oceans (EPA);
- There are 315 billion pounds of plastic in our oceans today (5 Gyres Institute);
- At least 267 species worldwide are known to ingest marine plastic debris, including 86 percent of all sea turtle species, 44 percent of all seabird species, and 43 percent of marine mammal species (California Coastal Commission);
- Marine animal ingestion of plastic causes blockages within the digestion system and

eventual death (SEE Turtles);

- Given that nearly all sea turtle species are classified as endangered, plastic is a serious threat to species survival and global biodiversity (WWF);

Whereas, bottled water requires significantly more energy and material inputs to produce than does tap water:

- On average, bottled water requires 1,580 times more energy to produce and distribute than tap water (Pacific Institute);
- Northwestern University would conserve 107,507 gallons of water used in the production of bottled water per year by ending the sale of bottled water on campus (Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, Sodexo and CASE data);
- Northwestern University would avoid 233,701 pounds of CO₂ emissions per year by eliminating the sale of bottled water on campus (Natural Resources Defense Council, Food and Water Watch). This is the equivalent of planting 4,868 trees (American Forests);
- Northwestern University would save 4,674 cubic feet of solid waste (PET bottles, caps, and secondary packaging) by eliminating the sale of bottled water on campus (Natural Resources Defense Council, Food and Water Watch);

Whereas, global water scarcities have produced human rights implications:

- It takes 3 liters of water to manufacture and bottle 1 liter of bottled water, resulting in a total of 93 billion liters of water wasted each year in the United States (Pacific Institute).
- Given that we are entering a global water crisis and 1 in 9 people lack access to enough clean drinking water, this waste is irresponsible (WHO/UNICEF);
- In 2010, the UN General Assembly declared “the right to safe and clean drinking water as a human right”;
- In 2007, Atlanta experienced an extreme drought and, despite the governor declaring a state of emergency, Coca-Cola continued to extract water from Lake Lanier, which supplies municipal drinking water for 5 million people, in order to bottle and manufacture Dasani brand-bottled water (New York Times);
- The bottled water industry continues to exploit communities in this manner, leaving them with low water tables and devastated ecosystems. Meanwhile, the community’s water supply is being packaged in plastic and sold back to them (Corporate Accountability International);
- 47% of all bottled water is derived from tap water, which is a problem as the bottled water industry is selling our municipal supplies back to us at an incredibly inflated cost (Food and Water Watch);

Whereas, Northwestern has a contract with Coca-Cola and purchased at least 244,272 bottles of water from Coca-Cola during the 2012-2013 academic year, thereby supporting this wasteful use of water;

Whereas, the sale of bottled water on campus is contrary to:

- The University’s mission to contribute to solutions and practices of sustainable environment (Northwestern University Strategic Plan 2011);
- The Office of Sustainability’s mission to address the global challenges of sustainability and;
- Facilities Management’s commitment to environmental responsibility and mission to reduce waste on campus;

Whereas, there are feasible alternatives to bottled water that are more cost-effective, environmentally conscious, and accessible:

- Tap water is 240 to 10,000 times less expensive than bottled water (Natural Resources Defense Council);
- Northwestern provides every incoming student with a courtesy reusable water bottle;
- Water fountains are easily accessible on campus and water fountains are consistently upgraded to reusable bottle-friendly refilling stations;
- Norris collaborated with Pura Playa to install 6 new water-refilling stations in the summer of 2013;
- It is Residential Services' policy to upgrade water fountains to water refilling stations as each residence hall is remodeled (Paul Riel, Executive Director of Residential Services);
- It is campus policy to upgrade water fountains to refilling stations when the water fountain in question requires maintenance (Sheila Driscoll, Business and Finance Director of the Division of Student Affairs);

Whereas, a number of universities, including peer institutions like Harvard University and Brown University have taken concrete steps, including student referenda and sales phase-outs, to reduce the sale of bottled water on their campuses;

Whereas, a number of universities, including peer institutions like Washington University in St. Louis and regional institutions like Loyola University Chicago have already gone bottled water-free on their campuses;

Whereas, Washington University in St. Louis modified its contract with Coca-Cola in 2009 to exclude bottled water, demonstrating that the same change is possible with the Northwestern University Coca-Cola contract (Washington University in St. Louis Newsroom);

Whereas, over 1,000 Northwestern students have signed the petition urging Northwestern University to go bottled water-free;

Be it resolved by the Faculty Senate here assembled, that the Faculty Senate supports the Northwestern community to take immediate steps towards going bottled water-free, with the goal of being completely bottled water-free by April of 2016.

Be it further resolved, that the Faculty Senate supports that, as a bottled water-free campus, Northwestern University will not sell bottled water in on-campus locations, including, but not limited to, convenience stores and vending machines.

Be it further resolved, that the Faculty Senate believes that Northwestern has the potential and responsibility to be a leader in sustainable practices and that going bottled water-free is an important step in this process.

Be it further resolved, that the Faculty Senate recommends that all old drinking fountains be replaced with the new water bottle refilling stations by April 2016.