

***Let's Chuck the Bottle***  
**Jim Hightower** (January 11, 2010)

Chances are that your city's tap water, which is inspected several times daily, is at least as pure (and often more so) than the pricey stuff.



Bottled pollution.

I know we're a nation of inveterate consumers, but who would buy pollution in a bottle?

Well, millions of Americans do, to the tune of \$11 billion-worth a year. That's the size of our bottled-water industry, dominated by such giants as Nestlé and Coca-Cola. But wait, shriek industry PR flacks, our product is pure goodness, not pollution. What are you talking about?!

Start with the little-reported fact that bottled water can contain a toxic mix of industrial chemicals never tested for safety. Also, many tests of bottled water are done by the corporations themselves, rather than by independent, certified labs. Even when contaminants are found, the marketers don't have to tell consumers or public officials about them. Chances are that your city's tap water, which is inspected several times daily, is at least as pure (and often more so) than the pricey stuff in bottles.

Speaking of bottles, both the production and disposal of billions of tons of these throwaways is a pollution nightmare. The Environmental Working Group, for example, has highlighted how an area of the Pacific Ocean that amounts to a massive plastic-water-bottle dump is twice the size of Texas. You can't throw water bottles away—because there is no “away.”

Then there's the absurdly huge carbon footprint created by hauling bottled water back and forth across our country, not to mention across oceans, bringing water all the way from France or Fiji. If you need a textbook example of energy absurdity, try this: New York water is trucked to California, and California water is trucked to New York.

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The good news is us: consumers! Individuals, companies, restaurants, cities, states, and other entities are chucking the bottle, ending their silly addiction to a totally unnecessary source of pollution and waste. To join the effort, go to [www.takebackthetap.org](http://www.takebackthetap.org).

Jim Hightower is a radio commentator, writer, public speaker, and the 2009 winner of the Nation/Puffin Prize. He's also editor of the populist newsletter, The Hightower Lowdown.

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