



Press Release

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For Immediate Release

March 23, 2010

Thousands of Taxpayer Dollars Flow to Bottled Water *Second Installment of Report Calls Such Spending Wasteful, Group Works with Governor to Support of Public Water*

Denver, CO – Colorado spent at least \$154,000 last year on bottled water, according to the second installment of the report *Getting States Off the Bottle* released today by Corporate Accountability International.

The states surveyed in this round of analysis are: Minnesota, Maryland, Colorado, New Mexico, and Oregon. The range of expenditures and allocations in these states were between \$78,000 and \$475,000 during Fiscal Year 2009.

“Faith groups have been in the forefront of many campaigns against bottled water. Religious leaders have spoken out against the appropriation and exploitation of public water supplies for corporate profit. Churches have educated their members and communities about the wide-spread and long-lasting environmental impacts of water bottles, and have rejected this expansion of consumer culture,” Rev. Peter Sawtell, Executive Director of Eco-Justice Ministry.

Like Rev. Peter Sawtell of Eco-Justice Ministry, here in Colorado and nationwide, many local restaurants, faith groups, organizations and individuals are signing-on to letters to their Governor and taking the pledge to serve or chose tap water over bottled water. In 2008, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, representing more than 1200 mayors, resolved to encourage mayors to phase out city spending on bottled water. To date, more than 100 cities have taken action to cut spending on bottled water or support public water systems. Three states have also taken action including Illinois, Virginia and New York.

Governors and mayors are stewards of our public water systems, responsible for overseeing budgets that provide the overwhelming majority of public funding for this essential public service. But the need for greater investment in these systems is growing rapidly, while

federal funding for these systems is languishing. Nationally public water systems face a \$22 billion annual investment gap.

A major cause of the gap in funding has been the marketing and promotion of bottled water. Marketing campaigns, like Nestlé's *Born Better*, have convinced one in five people to believe the only place to get clean drinking water is from a bottle. And as public confidence in tap water has eroded, so too has the political will to invest in public water.

"The bottled water industry has manufactured demand for an essential resource that already flows from our taps," said Kristin Urquiza, campaign director for Corporate Accountability International's Think Outside The Bottle campaign. "The marketing has been so effective that even the cities and states charged with the stewardship of our tap water are spending millions on bottled water, sending the wrong message about the quality of our tap water."

After all, up to forty percent of bottled water sold comes from the same source as tap water. Tap water is also more highly regulated than what comes in the bottle.

Public education campaigns like Think Outside the Bottle are, however, restoring confidence in public water systems. A recent Harris Poll found that 29 percent of people switched from bottled to tap water in the last year. An overall decline in the North American bottled water market reflects this shift in behavior and attitude toward the tap. However, state action to invest in public water is still lagging. While each state profiled in the report has taken some steps to allocate funding towards water infrastructure – such as dedicating funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to water systems – even these steps are a drop in the bucket compared to what will be needed to close the gap.

"During these tough economic times our states should be spending scarce public dollars on projects that provide vital public services and grow the economy at large, not just the bottom line for a handful of private corporations," said Urquiza. "Investment in public water is, in this respect, one of the wisest investments we can make."

According to a U.S. Conference of Mayors report, every dollar invested in public water generates more than six for the economy at large in the long term.

For the full report visit www.StopCorporateAbuse.org/GettingStatesOffTheBottle

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