

Urge Your Elected Officials to Protect ALL of Our Water!

On October 18, 2023 — the 51st anniversary of the Clean Water Act — members of the U.S. House of Representatives introduced the Clean Water Act of 2023 (H.R. 5983). This bill would restore protections to vital water resources that lost them as a result of the May 2023 Supreme Court decision in the *Sackett v. EPA* case. Ensuring that all water bodies, including streams and wetlands, are protected as Congress intended remains a priority campaign for Clean Water Action. You can help by [taking action today](#) to urge your U.S. Representative to support this bill that would protect water quality and our drinking water!

We CAN Get the Lead Out of Drinking Water!

We will be mobilizing people to weigh in on a new U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposal to reduce lead in drinking

water. EPA's proposal, though not final, is in itself a victory. We have been urging drinking water systems to fully replace all the lead "service line" pipes in their systems for many years and have urged EPA to include that in Safe Drinking Water Act regulations. Read our press release on EPA's proposal [here](#).



Federal Budget Update — Critical Protections and Investments Remain at Risk

As we go to press, the U.S. Congress has not finalized a federal budget for the fiscal year that began October 1. Extremists in Congress continue to propose

massive cuts to clean water and clean air programs as well as to historic investments in water infrastructure and addressing the climate crisis. Your federal elected officials need to hear from you. Tell them to protect people and not polluters [here](#).



We're Taking on Plastic Pollution at the Source!

How much do you know about the production of a plastic cup or what happens once you're done with it? At Clean Water Action, we look at plastic's entire life cycle — from the petrochemical facilities spewing toxics into nearby neighborhoods as they produce raw plastic to the incinerators and landfills where most plastic items end up to the coastal waterways contaminated with microplastics.

We have to disrupt this linear cycle of extraction and disposal, and it starts with creating an alternative vision — ReThink Disposable. Clean Water Action's award-winning ReThink Disposable program has launched in New England, helping restaurants and institutions make the switch from single-use disposable items to durable, safe reusables. The dining rooms and cafeterias that make the switch not only reduce waste — they save money too!

We already have some great partnerships to announce! First, the Middletown, Connecticut public schools are switching all of their school cafeterias to reusables in partnership with the City of Middletown and with the support of the Community Foundation of Middlesex County and Sustainable CT. This transition will eliminate over 3 million pieces of single-use items, the equivalent of 15.5 tons of trash, every year.



▲ Giancarlo Osiecki, manager of the Northampton location of La Veracruzana, showing his restaurant's new reusable salsa cups.

In Massachusetts, we're partnering with the City of New Bedford to offer one-time stipends of \$300-\$600 for restaurants that replace disposable wares with reusables for in-house dining. And La Veracruzana, a Massachusetts chain of Mexican eateries, officially swapped their disposable plastic salsa cups with reusable metal containers. That's tens of thousands of plastic cups being kept out of our environment every year.

We're just getting started, and you can help!

TAKE ACTION!

Do you have a favorite local restaurant that offers disposable items for dining-in like utensils, cups, or sauce dishes? [Nominate them to join ReThink Disposable!](#) We will show them how their small business can save money by switching to reusables, and help them make the transition!



MASSACHUSETTS

The Zero Carbon Renovation Fund — a Bridge to the Clean Energy Future

Imagine this: It's 2050, and we've done it. We have converted from fossil fuels to clean electricity. We have a strong, resilient grid. The air is cleaner, and people are healthier. In 2021, Massachusetts passed landmark legislation that commits the state to this clean energy future, pledging to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 85% below 1990 levels by 2050. To keep our state on track, the legislation included interim deadlines, and a big one is coming up! By 2030, emissions must drop by 50%.

A large portion of Massachusetts's climate emissions aren't coming from power plants or gasoline-powered vehicles — they're coming from our buildings! To meet our climate goals, we need to change the way we heat, cool, and power them. According to the Final Report of the Massachusetts Clean Heating Commission, 500,000 homes need to convert to energy efficient electric heating by 2030, and 100,000 homes per year need to convert after that.

That's a huge lift, but Massachusetts can do it, and we're going to do it equitably. All the state's planning documents have promised that our state's clean energy transition will put those most at risk from climate change first in line for investments in clean energy and resilience.

That's where the Zero Carbon Renovation Fund comes in. Clean Water Action is one of 194 environmental, housing, and civil rights organizations supporting H3232/S2365, [An Act](#)

Establishing a Zero Carbon Renovation Fund, sponsored by Senator Adam Gomez of Lawrence and Representative Andres Vargas of Haverhill. This bill creates a \$300 million fund to complete deep energy retrofits of affordable housing, schools, and small "minority and women owned" businesses. Money is available state-wide, with priority for environmental justice communities, "Gateway Communities," and municipalities hard hit by the coronavirus.

In a deep energy retrofit, the outer walls, roof, windows, and floor of a building are made as airtight and thermally efficient as possible, with extra layers of insulation, triple glazed windows, and other upgrades. Heat pumps provide heating and cooling. On-site or off-site renewables provide power, and all appliances are electric. Deep energy retrofits can reduce a building's energy needs by 40-70 percent, lowering operating costs while still keeping residents comfortable.

But these retrofits require upfront capital. That's why Clean Water Action is advocating for this public fund that can directly invest in schools and housing. The Zero Carbon Renovation Fund will help jumpstart the market and move the state forward towards our climate and equity goals. And it will ensure that that the comfort, clean air, and energy saving benefits of deep energy retrofits come to every zip code in the Commonwealth, not just the wealthy ones.

Highlights from the Blog: We All Live Downstream!

In case you missed it, here are some great reads from our Clean Water blog. Grab a mug of cocoa and catch up!

[Party Without Plastics](#): One mom's hilarious guide to navigating children's birthday parties without contributing to the plastics crisis.

[Air Quality Safety Up in the Air](#): How to Find Your Footing: Remember the summer of wildfire smoke? Read this excellent essay by one of our interns on finding hope while confronting a blurry sun.

[To Fight Cancer, Fight Toxics](#): A Breast Cancer Awareness Month essay calling out the toxics lurking in everyday products.

CONNECTICUT, MASSACHUSETTS

This Winter, We're Fighting for Climate Justice (and Cozy Homes!)

Everyone should have access to energy efficiency upgrades. These improvements, including installing new thermostats, replacing old windows and doors, adding insulation, upgrading old inefficient appliances, and even switching to a heat pump for home heating and cooling, not only save residents money on their energy bills, but they also make homes more comfortable. A well-insulated home costs less to keep warm in the long New England winter, and the energy savings mean less carbon emissions generated as well.

The benefits of energy efficiency upgrades should flow to every community, regardless of their race and income, but in both Massachusetts and Connecticut, underserved and language-isolated communities struggle with high electricity bills while wealthier suburbs access state and utility energy efficiency programs at higher rates. In Massachusetts, for example, wealthier suburban residences are 6-7 times more likely to access Mass Save® programs than low- and moderate-income communities and communities of color.

Clean Water Action is working in Connecticut and Massachusetts to overcome barriers to participation in these programs. In Massachusetts, we're working as part of the Green Justice Coalition to push Mass Save to prioritize outreach to low- to moderate-income folks, immigrants, those who are English isolated, and renters. Clean Water Fund is participating in the Mass Save Community First

Partnership, working on direct outreach in the cities of [Attleboro](#), [Fall River](#), [Taunton](#), [New Bedford](#), and [Westport](#). Shay Brooks, Clean Water's new Energy Efficiency Outreach Specialist and a Fall River native, will be leading this effort. So far, we have conducted over 100 outreach events including door-to-door canvassing, participating in Main Street events to uplift opportunities for small business owners, and joint events with the Coalition for Social Justice, and we're just getting started.

In Connecticut, we continue our years long work with the CT Energy Efficiency Board to build support for partnership opportunities that leverage and fund direct community engagement with residents in environmental justice communities. We are thrilled to have Sharod Blizzard, MBA, as the new Energy Justice Community Organizer. Sharod is leading direct community engagement in Waterbury, using his deep knowledge of the community to help residents take advantage of energy efficiency services as well as identify structural and systemic barriers that limit their participation.

Fighting for climate justice means ensuring that the communities most impacted by climate change and pollution are at the front of the line for resiliency efforts, energy efficiency upgrades, and clean energy jobs. Clean Water Action will look to build on our local partnerships and ensure that we build a clean energy future that is truly "for all."

Meet the Growing Climate Justice Team in Massachusetts!



We recently welcomed [Rev. Vernon K. Walker](#) as our new Climate Justice Program Director and [Shay Brooks](#) as our new Energy Efficiency Outreach Specialist, allowing us to engage both in the State House and on the ground to guarantee that climate justice solutions center those who are most impacted.

"The impacts of the climate crisis will not be felt equally. Environmental justice communities already suffering from disproportionate pollution impacts are also now facing dangerously hot summers and flooding. That's why it is vital that our climate work center equity and racial justice." — Rev. Vernon K. Walker

MASSACHUSETTS

What Do We Want for the Holidays? Legislation to Fight Toxics!

PFAS. Phthalates. Lead. Toxic substances shouldn't be in the water we drink, the air we breathe, the surfaces we play on, or the products we bring into our homes. Clean Water Action has long been at the forefront of tackling toxics before they get loose in the environment. It's always cheaper and easier to prevent pollution than to clean it up after the fact. This legislative session, we are supporting two priority bills to turn off the tap on toxics in our homes and environment.

First, we are fighting for a Massachusetts comprehensive ban on PFAS (S1356/H2197). Why? PFAS don't break down in the environment, so these "forever chemicals" are found virtually everywhere on Earth, including in human breast milk and blood. Once in our bodies, they increase our risk of certain cancers, immunosuppression, liver disease, endocrine disruption, developmental and reproductive harm, asthma, and neurological problems. We are working with allied elected officials and coalition partners to shepherd a Massachusetts PFAS ban through the legislature. Stay tuned!

Second, we are leading the effort to protect the most vulnerable residents of the Commonwealth, our kids, from toxics. Safe children's products should be a right, not a privilege. The Toxic Free Kids Act (S175/H318) will require businesses to disclose if toxic chemicals are in children's products they sell or manufacture in Massachusetts, giving Massachusetts families the information they need to keep kids safe. The legislation will also ban the worst toxics from children's products, starting with PFAS.

Children's bodies are still growing and developing, so exposure to toxic chemicals can have a lifetime of impacts. It's no wonder then that some worried parents turn to a high-end market for toys, soaps, and clothes marketed as "natural." But there is no guarantee that products labelled "natural" or "green" are actually free of toxic chemicals. Some products do have third party certifications, but these items are often more expensive and unaffordable to families with fewer resources. The Toxic Free Kids Act will finally give parents and caregivers an official resource to know what substances are in what products, and by banning the worst toxics, the bill makes safe and healthy kids' products accessible to everyone.

Want to help? Please [contact your elected officials](#), and tell them to [support the comprehensive PFAS ban](#) and the Toxic Free Kids Act! We can build a healthy future for everyone in Massachusetts!



▲ L-R: Dr. Laurel Schaidler, Senior Scientist at Silent Spring Institute; Dr. Joel Tickner, UMass Lowell Professor; Ramya Kumar, Resilient Sisterhood Project; Naga Vikram, Mass Breast Cancer Coalition; Laura Spark, Clean Water Action; Daniel McCarthy, Sierra Club MA; and Deirdre Cummings, MassPIRG at the State House to tell legislators to pass the Toxic Free Kids bill.



▲ Intern Catherine Middelmann poses outside the Massachusetts State House before heading inside to meet with legislators.

RHODE ISLAND

“What’s a Merf?!” Your Bottle Bill Study Commission Update!

Thanks to you, our members, and our coalition partners, the bottle bill legislative study commission is here! This is a big deal: legislators from both parties are sitting at the table with advocates, waste and recycling experts, small business owners, and beverage companies to discuss policy solutions to beverage bottle pollution and waste. And we all agree that there is a problem.

During the second meeting of the commission, Terry Gray of the Department of Environmental Management noted that the use of plastics is growing. “It’s pretty alarming,” he said. And he’s right. Plastics production has increased exponentially since the 1950s, and we aren’t slowing down. According to [a recent study](#) by researchers at the University of Rhode Island, the top two inches of the floor of Narragansett Bay now contain more than 1,000 tons of microplastics, mostly from single-use plastic items including bottles.

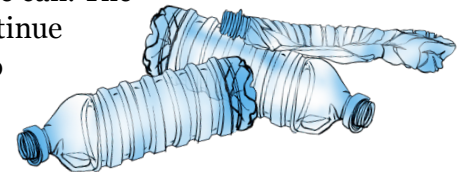
We also heard from Jared Rhodes of the Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation (RIRRC) who explained how Rhode Island’s materials recovery facility (the merf!) works. He noted the limitations of Rhode Island’s current single-stream recycling system and pointed to a state by state comparison study that showed that while Rhode Island is doing well, bottle bill states are doing better.



▲ Rhode Island Director Jed Thorp testifies at the November 6th meeting of the bottle bill study commission.

So why are bottle bill states better at recycling? One reason is recyclables collected in a “single stream” system can get smashed in the truck, spilled on, and contaminated. Rhodes noted, for example, that glass is by far the largest portion by weight of what the MRF processes, but it is being ground up and used as landfill cover. “This glass is not the clean, color sorted glass that you might imagine. This glass is small bits mixed with plastic and other materials. No one wants this glass as it currently sits.” Additionally, some loads that come into the MRF are so contaminated with non-recyclable items, that the whole load ends up in the landfill. All told, Rhodes detailed, “about 13,000 tons of beverage containers are heading to the landfill each year, based on the [Waste Categorization Study](#).”

Clean Water Action also testified! Our members know why [bottle bills are a proven policy solution to litter and waste](#), and we laid out the case for the legislators on the committee while also offering our suggestions to ensure that Rhode Island gets the details right and passes the strongest, most effective bottle bill we can. The commission will continue to hold meetings into the Spring of 2024. We’ll be there!



Election Wins in Rhode Island!



Odd years are normally quiet in the Ocean State, but unexpected vacancies led to special elections for Congress and State Senate. In State Senate District 1, Clean Water Action’s endorsed candidate, [Jake Bissaillon](#), won his election. And in Rhode Island’s 1st Congressional District, [Gabe Amo](#), also endorsed by Clean Water Action, won his special election to replace outgoing environmental champion Representative Cicilline. We look forward to working with Jake and Gabe to fight for our climate future! Onwards to 2024!

Celebrating with Our Members!

We've missed you! After years of Zoom cocktails and webinars, we've enjoyed spending 2023 with our members and friends.

Clean Water Action's **Connecticut** team held the first in-person Harvest Celebration event in 3 years. We returned to the beautiful Indian Springs Golf Club and Café where we gathered with many friends including national board member Andy Bauer and former Connecticut Director Roger Smith. We also introduced new team members — Sharod Blizzard, Connecticut's Energy Justice Coordinator and Amber Schmidt, New England's ReThink Disposable Coordinator. It was a great time and wonderful to catch up as well as gear up for the work ahead!



▲ Attendees enjoy Connecticut's 2023 Harvest Celebration! Upper L to R: Sharod Blizzard (CT Energy Justice Organizer), Kenny Foscue, Louis Rosado Burch, Amber Schmidt (Clean Water's ReThink Disposable organizer, Bottom L to R: Roger Smith (former CT director), Andy Bauer (national board member), Anne Hulick (CT director).



Clean Water Action's **Rhode Island** team hosted the always popular Electoberfest at the Guild Pawtucket Beer Hall, and it was a blast. Gabe Amo, running in Rhode Island's 1st Congressional district with Clean Water Action's endorsement, addressed the gathered environmental supporters, and we all toasted Seth Magaziner's successful 2022 race for Rhode Island's 2nd Congressional district. The proceeds raised at Electoberfest fund Clean Water Action's get-out-the-vote efforts, and we're heading into the 2024 election with energy and strength.

◀ Rhode Island Director Jed Thorp with Rhode Island Congressman Seth Magaziner at Electoberfest

Thank you to all of our New England members who joined us for events, member meet-ups, and forums in 2023. Look for more opportunities to gather together in 2024!

Thank you for supporting our year-end campaigns, and our ongoing work to restore and protect our communities.

CT: cleanwater.org/CTyearend

MA: cleanwater.org/MAYearend

RI: cleanwater.org/RIyearend



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