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RE: Request for inclusion in a VC Star article

Dear Editors:

I am writing in regard to your article "[Eco-tip: Do you need a water filter or water delivery? Trust the tap.](#)" which the *Ventura County Star* published on July 17, 2021. This article, by contributor David Goldstein, makes numerous false and misleading statements about bottled water, and neither Mr. Goldstein nor *Ventura County Star* editors reached out to the International Bottled Water Association (IBWA) to obtain the industry's perspective. We also noted that most of the critical comments in this article are from water filtration companies, which have commercial/self-serving interest in disparaging bottled water.

We respectfully request that the article be either removed or updated to address the inaccuracies and include omitted facts so that *Ventura County Star* readers are not misinformed about bottled water quality, safety, and regulation.

Americans are making great efforts to live a better lifestyle by choosing healthier foods and beverages, and drinking water—tap, bottled, or filtered—should be encouraged. With the high rates of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease in our on-the-go society, bottled water provides a safe, healthy, convenient beverage choice. Discouraging people from choosing this healthy drink option is not in the public interest.

Here is a summary of the text that requires editing:

VC Star: "if the label says "purified," it is just filtered tap water."

IBWA: IBWA supports strong and safe public water systems, as many bottled water companies use public water sources for their purified bottled water products. However, it is important to note that this is not "just tap water in a bottle." Once the tap water enters the bottled water plant, several processes are employed to ensure that it meets

the standard for purified water in the U.S. Pharmacopeia, 23rd Revision. Those treatments may include one or more of the following: reverse osmosis, distillation, micro-filtration, carbon filtration, ozonation, and ultraviolet (UV) light. The finished water product is then placed in a bottle under sanitary conditions and sold to the consumer. The chemical and physical quality of this water is not the same as water that comes out of the tap. If the finished water does not meet the strict U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations, then it is deemed adulterated and subject to recall.

VC Star: “[spring] water costs far more, creates air pollution and traffic as it is trucked long distances, and is not as closely regulated or monitored as municipal supplies.

IBWA: Most bottled water that is sourced locally is consumed locally because trucking water great distances is not cost-effective. Only a very small percentage of bottled water brands are shipped long distances, and those are usually international brands, not the majority of bottled water purchased in the United States (imports make up just 1.9 percent of the bottled water market, says the Beverage Marketing Corporation). In addition, by federal law, the FDA regulations governing the safety and quality of bottled water must be as protective of public health as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards for tap water. And, in some cases, such as lead, the bottled water regulations are more stringent. To suggest in any way that bottled water is less stringently regulated than tap water is simply not true.

VC Star: “if you think bottled water is safer than water from your tap, consider the problem of water dispensers . . . over time, water dispensers are exposed to things like dirt, dust, pollution, germs, bacteria, and sunlight that can impact the dispenser’s hygiene level.”

IBWA: The statements claiming that bottled water dispensers are unsafe are patently false. There are no safety concerns associated with bottled water products in sealed containers. Moreover, bottled water coolers are designed to minimize the water’s exposure to any harmful substances. With recommended maintenance and cleaning, which consumers can do themselves, there is very little chance that water from a water cooler would ever become contaminated.

Home delivery bottlers experienced record highs in residential business throughout the past year, as many consumers recognized the benefits of e-commerce and rapidly adopted direct-to-consumer services as an added convenience to their lifestyle. Many consumers report they plan to continue having bottled water delivered to their homes post-pandemic. In addition, many offices have water coolers and with more and more offices reopening in the United States, the office delivery business is expected to rebound.

In 2020, for the fifth year in a row, bottled water outsold carbonated soft drinks (by volume) and retained its title as America’s favorite packaged beverage. A significant portion of bottled water’s growth (44 percent since 2010) has come from people switching to bottled water from other less-healthy packaged drinks. And nine out of ten

Americans (91 percent) want bottled water to be available wherever other drinks are sold, according to The Harris Poll on behalf of IBWA. This healthy consumption shift from sugary drinks to bottled water could also work in reverse. If bottled water is not available, 74 percent of people say that they will turn to other packaged drinks, not tap water, The Harris Poll found. (<https://bottledwater.org/nr/consumers-want-bottled-water-to-be-available-wherever-drinks-are-sold-and-if-its-not-most-will-choose-another-packaged-beverage-that-uses-much-more-plastic/>)

We kindly request that you either remove or update your online story to reflect these facts so that your readers are not misinformed about the important role bottled water plays in people's lives.

Sincerely,

Jill Culora
Vice President Communications
International Bottled Water Association