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# Groups state their case on energy drinks

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Health advocates and beverage industry lobbyists took their last shot Tuesday at influencing [Suffolk](http://www.newsday.com/topics/Suffolk_County%2C_NY) County Executive Steve Bellone's decision on two controversial bills to limit minors' access to energy drinks.

More than a dozen people attended a hearing at Bellone's office in [Hauppauge](http://www.newsday.com/topics/Hauppauge%2C_NY) to weigh in on the bills that the county Legislature passed recently.

One prohibits distribution of energy drink samples or coupons to minors, while the other bans the sale of the drinks to minors at county parks.

Bellone has until April 19 to sign or veto the bills. He wasn't present for the 90-minute hearing, which his aides attended, but some speakers addressed him directly anyway.

"As a parent, I'm certain that you're concerned about what's available to your children via marketing and sales, especially via vending machines in county parks," said Tracy Trypuc, a Suffolk County Board of Health member who has led the push to restrict energy drinks. "As a county executive, you must be concerned about what is available to all of our children."

Supporters of the restrictions argue that energy drinks, which contain caffeine and other stimulants, are dangerous to children in large amounts. They cite research that the beverages can cause elevated heart rates, [high blood pressure](http://www.newsday.com/topics/High_Blood_Pressure), dizziness and death.

The industry strongly disputes the studies and has blanketed Suffolk officials with research showing that the majority of energy drinks have less caffeine per fluid ounce than coffeehouse drinks. They say that the most [common](http://www.newsday.com/topics/Common_%28musician%29) additives, such as taurine and guarana, do not enhance the caffeine effect.

"They lack a scientific and marketing rationale," Jim McGreevy, the American Beverage Association's senior vice president for government affairs, said of Suffolk's bills.

James Kelly, a [Huntington Station](http://www.newsday.com/topics/Huntington_Station%2C_NY) resident who supports the bills, displayed tall cans of Monster and [Red Bull](http://www.newsday.com/topics/Red_Bull) energy drinks. He noted that the products are called safe under "intended uses," but that individual cans sometimes contain up to 3 servings.

Placing one of the cans on the table for effect, Kelly said: "Nobody buys a can of this size, and only drinks half of it."

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