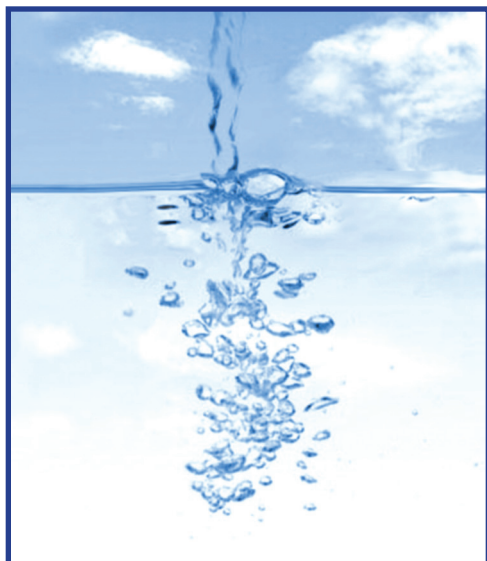


H2O to go: Changing humidity into Water

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If you were watching the news this week, you most likely saw at least a few snippets of Supreme Court nominee Elena Kagan breaking a sweat while fielding questions. But if you were actually in Washington this week, you know that Kagan's perspiration likely had less to do with the questioning than with the sweltering humidity that has seeped into Washington's summer air. It's the kind of air that makes us dream of the West Coast, a place where — we imagine — the crisp breeze ruffles salt-tinged hair and street trash doth not overflow. It makes poetic sense that a San Francisco company, EcoloBlue Inc., would come to the rescue, touting a \$1,699 magic machine that produces purified water out of humidity.

Company representatives spent the last week of June meeting with Washington-area business leaders to lay the seeds for what they're calling a "grassroots marketing campaign" for the 3-year-old company's latest model. The new EcoloBlue 30s uses refillable carbon dioxide canisters to create sparkly carbonated water out of air so heavy you could slice it. Like earlier EcoloBlue models before it, the new water cooler uses condensation coils to pull the humidity out of the air, then puts the water through a 12-stage filtration process that includes ultraviolet lights to kill off bacteria, says EcoloBlue's education director, Thomas Ryan Ward.

The company hopes to partner with organizations like the D.C. Chamber of Commerce, the Department of Transportation and the Department of Homeland Security, each of which has had EcoloBlue demonstration models on their premises for the past few months. Ward declined to disclose sales figures for the fledgling company, but claims the product has been a big hit with the "survivalist, off-the-grid" crowd so far. Still, he says, EcoloBlue is pretty sure the product will appeal to the more genteel demographic here in D.C. "We see all those Deer Park trucks running around town," Ward says. "People just seem to have a — I'm going to say it — an addiction to bottled water." Steven Jumper, the D.C. Chamber's spokesman, said the machine does have at least one thing going for it: "It's a pretty cool conversation piece for our lobby."

