

SETTLEMENT AND RELEASE AGREEMENT

1. **INTRODUCTION**

1.1. **Ecological Alliance, LLC and Votum Enterprises**

This Settlement Agreement is entered into by and between Ecological Alliance, LLC ("Alliance"), on the one hand, and Votum Enterprises ("Votum"), on the other hand, with Alliance and Votum collectively referred to as the "Parties."

1.2. **General Allegations**

Alliance alleges that Votum manufactured and/or distributed and/or offered for sale in the State of California sparkle pouches that allegedly contain Diisononyl phthalate [DINP] (the "Product") and that such sales have not included warnings pursuant to the Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986, California Health & Safety Code sections 25249.6 *et seq.* ("Proposition 65"). California has identified and listed DINP under Proposition 65 as a chemical known to the State of California to cause cancer.

1.3. **Product Description**

The Product that is covered by this Settlement Agreement is defined as sparkle pouches that allegedly contain DINP that Votum has sold, offered for sale or distributed in California.

1.4. **Notice of Violation**

On August 22, 2024, Alliance served Votum, Ross Stores, Inc., and the requisite public enforcement agencies eligible to initiate Proposition 65 actions on behalf of the People of the State of California with documents entitled "60-Day Notice of Violation" ("Notice") that provided Votum and such public enforcers with notice that Votum was allegedly in violation of California Health & Safety Code section 25249.6 for failing to warn consumers and customers that the Product exposed users in California to DINP. To the best of the Parties' knowledge, no

public enforcer has commenced or is diligently prosecuting the allegations set forth in the Notice.

1.5. No Admission

The Parties enter into this Settlement Agreement to settle disputed claims between them as set forth herein and in the Notice concerning Votum's compliance with Proposition 65. Specifically, Votum denies the material factual and legal allegations contained in Alliance's Notice and maintains that all products that it has manufactured, imported, distributed or sold in California, including the Product, have been and are in compliance with Proposition 65 or any other statutory, regulatory, common law or equitable doctrine. Nothing in this Settlement Agreement shall be construed as an admission by Votum of any fact, finding, issue of law, or violation of law; nor shall compliance with this Settlement Agreement constitute or be construed as an admission by Votum of any fact, finding, conclusion, issue of law, or violation of law, such being specifically denied by Votum. However, nothing in this section shall diminish or otherwise affect the obligations, responsibilities, and duties of Votum under this Settlement Agreement.

1.6. Effective Date

For purposes of this Settlement Agreement, the term "Effective Date" shall mean the date this Settlement Agreement is fully executed.

2. INJUNCTIVE RELIEF: WARNING

2.1. Warning


The Product shall be accompanied by a warning as described in Section 2.2 below, no later than 180 days after the Effective Date unless the Product contains no more than 1000 parts per million ("ppm") DINP. Any product with 1000 ppm DINP or less shall be considered

compliant with Proposition 65. The warning requirements set forth in Section 2.2 below shall apply only to the Products that are distributed, marketed, sold or shipped for sale in the State of California. The warning requirement shall not apply to the Products that are already in the stream of commerce as of the Effective Date or that Votum places into the stream of commerce within 180 days of the Effective Date.

2.2. Warning Language

Where required, Votum shall provide Proposition 65 warnings as follows:

- (a) Votum may use any of the following warning statements or any other warning statements that comply with 27 Cal. Code of Regs. Section 25602(a)(1)-(4) in full compliance with this Section:

(1)  **WARNING:** This product can expose you to chemicals including Diisononyl phthalate [DINP], which is known to the State of California to cause cancer. For more info go to www.P65Warnings.ca.gov.

(2)  **WARNING:** Cancer – www.P65Warnings.ca.gov.

(b) Where the sign, label or shelf tag for the product is not printed using the color yellow, the symbol may be printed in black and white. The symbol shall be placed to the left of the text of the warning, in a size no smaller than the height of the word “WARNING”.

(c) For the purposes of this Settlement Agreement, the Parties deem proper the warning language set forth in subsection (a) above. The Parties recognize that the suggested warnings in subsection (a) are not the exclusive methods of providing a warning under Proposition 65 and its implementing regulations. If Votum elects to use alternate or additional warnings that comply with Proposition

65 regulations, then such warnings shall be deemed proper warnings pursuant to the terms of this Settlement Agreement.

(d) If Proposition 65 warnings for DINP should no longer be required, Votum shall have no further obligations pursuant to this Settlement Agreement.

(e) In the event that the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment promulgates one or more regulations requiring or permitting warning text and/or methods of transmission different than those set forth above, VOTUM shall be entitled to use, at its discretion, such other warning text and/or method of transmission without being deemed in breach of this Agreement.

(f) Foreign Languages. Additionally, if a covered Product's labeling includes consumer information in a language other than English, the warning will be provided in that language in addition to English.

(g) Online Sales. If Votum sells Products via an internet website it controls to customers located in California, the warning requirements of this section shall be satisfied if the foregoing warning appears either: (a) on the same web page on which a Product is displayed and/or described; (b) on the same page as the price for the Product; (c) on one or more web pages displayed to a California purchaser prior to purchase during the checkout process; or (d) via a hyperlink taking the customer to a separate page containing the warning language, provided that the hyperlink appears on the same page as either the product description or product price are displayed, or appears prior to completion of the sale at checkout.

Alternatively, a symbol consisting of a black exclamation point in a yellow or white equilateral triangle may appear adjacent to or immediately following the

display, description, price, or checkout listing of the Product, if the warning statement appears elsewhere on the same web page in a manner that clearly associates it with the product(s) to which the warning applies.

3. PENALTIES PURSUANT TO HEALTH & SAFETY CODE SECTION 25249.7(b)

In settlement of all the claims referred to in this Settlement Agreement, VOTUM shall pay a total of \$200 in civil penalties in accordance with this Section. The penalty payment will be allocated in accordance with California Health & Safety Code section 25249.12(c)(1) & (d), with 75% of the funds remitted to the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment ("OEHHA") and the remaining 25% of the penalty remitted to Alliance. Alliance's counsel shall be responsible for delivering OEHHA's portion of any penalty payment made under this Settlement Agreement.

4. REIMBURSEMENT OF FEES AND COSTS

The Parties reached an accord on the compensation due to Alliance and its counsel under the private attorney general doctrine and principles of contract law. Under these legal principles, Votum shall reimburse Alliance's counsel for fees and costs, incurred as a result of investigating and bringing this matter to Votum's attention. Votum shall pay Alliance's counsel \$10,000 for all attorneys' fees, expert and investigation fees, and related costs associated with this matter and the Notice.

5. PAYMENT INFORMATION

By October 31, 2024, Votum shall make a total payment of Ten Thousand Two Hundred Dollars (\$10,200) for the civil penalties and attorney's fees / costs by wire transfer to Alliance's counsel Custodio & Dubey LLP:

Bank: Bank of America, N.A.

Routing No.: 026009593

Account No.: 325149324377

Beneficiary: Custodio & Dubey LLP

Other than this payment, each side is to bear its own attorneys' fees and costs.

6. RELEASE OF ALL CLAIMS

6.1. Release of Votum, Downstream Customers and Upstream Vendors

In further consideration of the promises and agreements herein contained, and for the payments to be made pursuant to Sections 3 and 4 above, Alliance, on behalf of itself, its past and current agents, representatives, attorneys, successors and/or assignees, hereby waives all rights to institute or participate in, directly or indirectly, any form of legal action and releases all claims relating to the Product (which includes all packaging, designs, and branding versions of the Product), including, without limitation, all actions, and causes of action, in law or in equity, suits, liabilities, demands, obligations, damages, costs, fines, penalties, losses or expenses (including, but not limited to, investigation fees, expert fees and attorneys' fees) of any nature whatsoever, whether known or unknown, fixed or contingent (collectively "Claims"), against (a) Votum, (b) each of Votum's downstream customers (including but not limited to Ross Stores, Inc.), distributors, wholesalers, vendors, licensors, licensees, auctioneers, retailers, franchisees, dealers, shareholders, cooperative members, owners, purchasers, users (collectively, "Downstream Releasees"), and (c) Votum's Downstream Releasees' parent companies, corporate affiliates, subsidiaries, and their respective officers, directors, attorneys, representatives, shareholders, agents, and employees, and sister and parent entities. (collectively "Releasees").

Alliance also, in its capacity, on behalf of itself, its past and current agents, representatives, attorneys, successors, and/or assignees and *not* in its representative capacity, provides a general release herein which shall be effective as a full and final accord and satisfaction, as a bar to all actions, causes of action, obligations, costs, expenses, attorneys' fees, damages, losses, claims, liabilities and demands of any nature, character or kind, known or unknown, suspected or unsuspected, against Votum and the Releasees. Alliance acknowledges that it is familiar with California Civil Code section 1542, which provides as follows:

A GENERAL RELEASE DOES NOT EXTEND TO CLAIMS THAT THE CREDITOR OR RELEASING PARTY DOES NOT KNOW OR SUSPECT TO EXIST IN HIS OR HER FAVOR AT THE TIME OF EXECUTING THE RELEASE AND THAT, IF KNOWN BY HIM OR HER, WOULD HAVE MATERIALLY AFFECTED HIS OR HER SETTLEMENT WITH THE DEBTOR OR RELEASED PARTY.

Alliance, in its capacity only, and on behalf of itself, its past and current agents, representatives, attorneys, successors, and/or assignees expressly waives and relinquishes any and all rights and benefits which it may have under, or which may be conferred on it by the provisions of California Civil Code section 1542 as well as under any other state or federal statute or common law principle of similar effect, to the fullest extent that it may lawfully waive such rights or benefits pertaining to the released matters.

6.2. Votum's Release of Alliance

Votum waives any and all claims against Alliance, its attorneys and other representatives, for any and all actions taken or statements made (or those that could have been taken or made) by Alliance and its attorneys and other representatives, whether in the course of investigating claims or otherwise seeking enforcement of Proposition 65 against it in this matter, and/or with respect to the Product.

7. GOVERNING LAW

The terms of this Settlement Agreement shall be governed by the laws of the State of California and apply within the State of California. In the event that Proposition 65 is repealed or is otherwise rendered inapplicable by reason of law generally, or as to the Product, then Votum shall have no further obligations pursuant to this Settlement Agreement.

8. NOTICES

Unless specified herein, all correspondence and notices required to be provided pursuant to this Settlement Agreement shall be in writing and personally delivered or sent by: (i) first-class, (registered or certified mail) return receipt requested; (ii.) email; or (iii) overnight courier on any party by the other party at the following addresses:

For Votum: Tedd Levine, Esq.
 THE LAW OFFICES OF TEDD S. LEVINE, LLC
 31 Dock Rd , Suite 162
 Remsenburg, NY 11960

For Alliance: Vineet Dubey, Esq.
 Custodio & Dubey LLP
 445 S. Figueroa St., Suite 2520
 Los Angeles, CA 90071

Any party, from time to time, may specify in writing to the other party a change of address to which all notices and other communications shall be sent.

9. COUNTERPARTS; FACSIMILE/E-SIGNATURES

This Settlement Agreement may be executed in counterparts and by facsimile or e-signatures, each of which shall be deemed an original, and all of which, when taken together, shall constitute one and the same document.

10. COMPLIANCE WITH HEALTH & SAFETY CODE SECTION 25249.7(f)

Alliance agrees to comply with the reporting form requirements referenced in California Health & Safety Code § 25249.7(f).

11. ENTIRE AGREEMENT

This Settlement Agreement contains the sole and entire agreement and understanding of the Parties with respect to the entire subject matter hereof, and all related prior discussions, negotiations, commitments and understandings. No other agreements, oral or otherwise, exist to bind either of the Parties.

12. SEVERABILITY


If, subsequent to the execution of this Settlement Agreement, any provision of this Settlement Agreement is held by a court to be unenforceable, the validity of the remaining provisions shall not be affected adversely.

13. MODIFICATION

This Settlement Agreement may be modified only by a written agreement signed by the Parties.

14. AUTHORIZATION

The undersigned are authorized to execute this Settlement Agreement on behalf of their respective Parties and have read, understood and agree to all of the terms and conditions of this Settlement Agreement.

<p style="text-align: center;">AGREED TO:</p> <p>Date: October <u>7</u> 2024</p> <p>By:  On Behalf of Ecological Alliance, LLC</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">AGREED TO:</p> <p>Date: October <u>16</u> 2024</p> <p>By: <u>Marvin Stetz</u> On Behalf of Votum Enterprises</p>
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