

# MYTHS & FACTS ABOUT EXPANDING THE RECYCLING REFUND IN MASSACHUSETTS



## **Myth: *It won't reduce litter!***

FACT: A 2009 MassDEP study found expansion beverage containers represented up to 80% of container litter in rivers and parks and up to 40% of total waste at parks and ball fields.

## **Myth: *Don't we already have municipal recycling services?***

FACT: Most communities in Massachusetts offer residents either curbside or drop-off collection of trash and recycling but these programs collect less than 1/3 of proposed expansion containers for recycling. Beverage containers covered under the Bottle Deposit Law are recycled at over 80%. This is because many of these beverages are consumed away from the home and a deposit offers the financial incentive needed to encourage recycling.

## **Myth: *It's unfair to place product take-back burden on distributors and retailers!***

FACT: That burden is currently on our municipalities, who pay millions of dollars to collect and dispose of these materials. The Bottle Deposit Law is one of the first and most successful producer responsibility laws requiring beverage producers to take back their containers.

## **Myth: *But cities and towns will lose revenue from their curbside recycling materials!***

FACT: Municipalities spend as much as \$7 million annually on collection and disposal of expansion containers, receiving less than \$1 million in revenue for these materials\*. An expansion would represent a cost savings to municipalities.

## **Myth: *It will increase the cost of beverages!***

FACT: Surveys conducted by MassDEP and the Environmental League of Massachusetts found inconsistent pricing patterns for beverages in Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Rhode Island. In many cases, the price of a 20 oz. Deposit soda in a neighboring state without a deposit law was greater than in Massachusetts.

## **Myth: *It's a significant burden to the consumer!***

FACT: 70% of beverage containers with a deposit are currently redeemed by consumers. This speaks to the ability and willingness of consumers to easily recycle containers at machines in local grocery stores and at redemption centers.

## **Myth: *Think of all the greenhouse gases from all the cars that will be on the road redeeming these bottles and cans!***

FACT: This assumes that consumers make a special trip only to redeem containers. With convenient redemption services at retailers and redemption centers, most consumers combine redemption of containers with other chores, like grocery shopping.



**Myth: *It's a significant burden to retailers!***

FACT: Retailers are compensated through a handling fee provided by producers for every container redeemed (currently \$.0225). A study profiled in an industry publication\*\* says shoppers who return empties at grocery stores spend up to 52% more per visit. One potential solution for small retailers is an opt-out provision (similar to the one in Maine) that would exempt these stores from having to take returns if they are associated with a local redemption center.

**Myth: *It will increase retailer operating costs! More labor is needed – it might cost up to \$100,000 to outfit a store for this expansion!***

FACT: Space constraints have been eased in recent years with the growth in the use of Reverse Vending Machines (RVMs). Most large retail and grocery stores already have these machines, which can easily be programmed to accept the expansion containers.

**Myth: *Why is Massachusetts the only state expanding its deposit law? Fraud will be rampant from other states! The state will lose money!***

FACT: Maine, New York and Connecticut have recently expanded their deposit laws beyond carbonated soda and beer. New Hampshire and Rhode Island are the only New England states without a deposit law. Any fraud from these states can be prevented through new RVM technology, Massachusetts specific barcoding by producers and state-level enforcement. Many major producers are already adding state specific barcoding to prevent fraud.

**Myth: *It will drive liquor and other retail stores out of business! Consumers will go to New Hampshire!***

FACT: The deposit is exactly that, a deposit, so there is no direct cost to consumers. The cost to drive to New Hampshire to avoid a five cent deposit negates any benefit. At 50 containers per gallon of gas, consumers are not likely to drive very far. In addition, liquor and wine are not included in the proposed expansion and these are the most common products where lost sales are reported.

\* MassDEP, 2009.

\*\* Tomra. "Return Magazine." Spring/Summer 2003.

60 Thoreau Street, #203  
Concord, MA 01742  
**Phone:** (617) 338-0244  
**Fax:** (801) 760-5056  
**[www.massrecycle.org](http://www.massrecycle.org)**