

Update the Bottle Bill!

Fact Sheet



What is the Bottle Bill?

The Bottle Bill is the common name for Massachusetts General Law (MGL) c.94, s.321-327. The law imposes a \$.05 refundable deposits on carbonated beverage containers (beer and soda) thus providing a financial incentive for the public to return them for recycling.

What will updating the Bottle Bill do?

Updating the Bottle Bill will add a refundable deposit to non-carbonated beverage containers as a means to reduce litter and increase recycling.

Why update the Bottle Bill?

In 1983, when the law was created, the law targeted containers for beverages that were most commonly consumed away from home - beer and soda - and the bottle bill has been effective in reducing the number of these containers found in litter. Today, much of the litter comes from non-carbonated beverages (water, juice, sport drinks, etc.) that have become common over the last few years. We need to update the Bottle Bill to keep it effective. There are many other reasons to update this law – see the next page for more!

How to update the Bottle Bill?

To update the law, the Legislature must pass a bill that would expand the containers covered under the law to include away-from-home beverage containers that are not carbonated, such as water, juice, sport drink, ice tea. The updated Bottle Bill would exclude milk beverages, medicines, and infant formula.

What happens to unclaimed deposits?

When a bottle is not returned for deposit (e.g. discarded as trash or placed in a regular recycling bin), the unclaimed deposit currently goes to the state's general fund. Proponents of the Updated Bottle Bill hope to designate a portion of the unclaimed bottle deposit revenue from bottles included in the updated bill for recycling related initiatives.

How effective is the Bottle Bill?

In Massachusetts, 70% of deposit containers were returned in 2008. An additional 10% are recycled at the curb. Compare this to 22% average recycling rate for beverage containers in states without a Bottle Bill.

Take Action NOW – It is Easy!

- 1) Ask your local elected officials to sign the *Resolution in Support of Updating the Bottle Bill*. You can find it at www.massrecycle.org/bottlebill.

Then email us (director@massrecycle.org) a copy of the signed resolution so we can add your community to our list of over 150 municipalities that have already signed on.

- 2) Call your State Senator and Representative, fax them this fact sheet and ask them to support updating the Bottle Bill. Find your legislator's contact information at www.malegislature.gov/People/FindMyLegislator

Send a quick email to us (director@massrecycle.org) with the names of the state rep and senator you called and/or the questions you need answered.

- 3) To read the text of the proposed bills and for more information, visit www.massbottlebill.org

Call your State Representative and Senator and say:

- Ask if they support the Updated Bottle Bill
- Ask them to contact the Telecommunications Committee and request the release the Bottle Bill for a vote ASAP
- Offer to send them a copy of this fact sheet.
- Ask your friends to call too.

Top 10 Reasons to Update The Bottle Bill



- 1. Catch up with consumer habits** ~ Since the original Bottle Bill was implemented in 1983, many new types of beverages have been introduced to the market. More than 400 million of these new beverages are consumed each year in Massachusetts, and are not redeemable under the original Bottle Bill.
- 2. Reduce litter** ~ Recent litter studies in Massachusetts have determined that non-redeemable beverage containers are far more likely to end up as litter than deposit containers, even though there are almost twice as many deposit containers sold.
- 3. Recover and recycle valuable materials** ~ Plastic, aluminum and glass beverage containers can't be recycled back into new consumer goods and containers if they've been thrown away. About 75% of deposit containers are recycled, while less than 35% of non-deposit containers are. What a waste!
- 4. Save energy** ~ Recycling plastic, metal and glass containers requires far less energy than extracting, purifying and manufacturing them from raw materials. For example, about 20 recycled aluminum cans can be made from the energy needed to produce one can from virgin ore. Throwing one aluminum can away wastes as much energy as pouring out half that can's volume in gasoline.
- 5. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions** ~ Increased recycling reduces the amount of energy needed by industry to make products from raw materials, reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- 6. Create jobs and stimulate the economy** ~ Gains in employment have been demonstrated in nearly every state with a deposit system. Massachusetts gained almost 2,000 jobs with implementation of the original bottle bill, and an increased volume of recycled beverage containers would require an expansion within the recycling industry to handle the extra material.
- 7. Reduce waste** ~ Adding noncarbonated beverage containers to the deposit/refund system would divert an additional half billion beverage containers/year from the trash to recycling markets. This would reduce the amount of solid waste sent to landfills and incinerators, and the need to manufacture that many new containers from raw materials, including fossil fuel.
- 8. Reduce costs to municipalities** ~ A recent MassDEP study estimates that it costs municipalities about \$5 million a year to manage nondeposit beverage containers as litter, trash, and even as recycling.
<http://www.mass.gov/dep/recycle/reduce/exbbmuni.pdf>
- 9. Support local redemption centers** ~ Redemption centers support local recycling efforts by providing a convenient recycling option to the public. Redemption centers are also a key component of fundraising efforts ("bottle drives") of many local charitable organizations, Scout Troops and school programs.
- 10. Give the responsibility to the producers** ~ Bottle bills shift the responsibility of managing beverage container waste from taxpayers to beverage manufacturers and consumers, helping to increase municipal funding for other important local needs.

Who else supports updating the Bottle Bill?

- MassDEP
- MassPIRG
- Environmental League of Massachusetts
- Massachusetts Sierra Club
- League of Women Voters
- Mass. Municipal Association
- 150 municipalities
- Mass. Audubon

MassRecycle is a statewide coalition made up of individuals, governments, businesses, institutions and non-profit organizations dedicated to promoting recycling. To help support our efforts or to learn more about MassRecycle visit www.massrecycle.org or call 617-338-0244.

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