



Container Deposit Legislation (aka Bottle Bill): Some Pros and Cons

Container deposit legislation, also known as a 'bottle bill,' has a long history of being contentious and polarizing. Following are some basic "Pro" and "Con" statements or positions one might encounter when discussing deposit legislation.

PRO: Increases recycling rates for beverage containers, from 75% - 95%, depending on deposit amount.

CON: Beverage containers only account for approximately 5% of the waste stream so does very little for the overall recycling rate.

PRO: Incentivizes people to recycle their containers.

CON: Deposits create dual systems for collecting recyclables in areas that already have curbside or drop-off recycling. This can negatively impact existing curbside and drop-off programs since they also depend on these containers for their income. Deposit systems cost more than curbside systems due to the separate infrastructure required and because it is only for a limited amount of recyclables. Curbside programs average \$125 for each ton of material recovered compared to at least \$500 per ton for forced deposits – a four-fold difference.

PRO: Citizen recyclers usually are well disposed to container deposit legislation.

CON: Grocers, liquor stores and other retailers find it problematic to collect, handle and store used beverage containers, especially near food items, and reverse transportation can be difficult to establish. Of course, some of this could be offset by handling fees from the deposits themselves and setting up redemption centers or reverse vending machines so retailers don't need to collect, handle and store.

PRO: Higher participation rates due to economic incentives.

CON: Limited access for the elderly, infirm or those without transportation.

PRO: Everyone makes trips to the store on a regular basis so access is very convenient.

CON: Inconvenient compared to curbside recycling.

PRO: Opportunities for fundraisers for clubs, non-profits, scout troops, etc.

PRO: Reduced littering.

CON: Comprehensive litter control programs provide a more efficient way to control litter – especially since they focus on all litter, not just the 8.5% of litter from beverage containers.

PRO: Unclaimed deposit monies can be used to fund much needed programs.

CON: These unclaimed deposits are needed to offset the cost of collection, so the expectation of additional funds is probably more than the reality. There will always be a fight about which programs should get the monies.

PRO: User fee.

CON: Another tax.