



Sustainability Legislation: Updates on the Bottle Bill

Local sustainability legislation sometimes gets lost in the shuffle, yet there have been recent updates to the Oregon bottle bill that impact you.

Did you know that Oregon was the first state to pass a “bottle bill” that places a deposit on beverage containers? Even with multiple states now participating, **two-thirds of all beverage containers** in the United States still never get recycled!



History

In 1971, Oregonians agreed to pay a five cent deposit on beer and soft drink containers. The law’s intent was to reduce litter and conserve resources. For the first 15 years of the program, 90% of containers were returned. Yet the **rate of return has now fallen** to only 75%. In part, that’s because the deposit amount has not kept up with inflation. With inflation, that five cent deposit would equate to **\$1.66 per six-pack** today!

New pilot redemption centers

- Retailers and grocery stores were originally required to have bottle collection centers. In 2011, the Oregon legislature established a pilot program of third party bottle redemption centers called **BottleDrop**.
- BottleDrop is designed to simplify the bottle deposit process by accepting all bottles, cans and other containers that are subject to the five cent Oregon bottle deposit—no matter what brand or where the containers were purchased.
- A couple pilot locations are centrally located near several large retailers. **Find a BottleDrop location**.

The size of the store does make a difference

- Large retail outlets of over 5,000 sq. ft. are **now required** to accept bottle and can returns of all brands and sizes for the beverages they sell. Therefore, if a store does not carry beer, it is not required to take back beer bottles. If they do sell beer, they have to take back all beer bottles, even those they do not sell.
- Retailers under 5,000 sq. ft. only have to accept brands and sizes they sell.

Oregon deposits and refunds may be increasing soon

If the redemption rate stays below 80% for two consecutive years, the Oregon Liquor Control Commission will increase the refund to 10 cents. Michigan’s deposit rate is the highest in the country at 10 cents. They also have the highest rate of redemption with **over 90%** of containers recycled.

Oregon bottle bill now covers the following items:

- Carbonated soft drinks
- Beer and malt beverages
- Soda water and mineral water
- Water and flavored water
- **By 2018 the list will increase** to cover all beverages except wine, liquor, milk and milk substitutes that are up to 1.5 liters in size.