

Oregon's Bottle Bill

Background

Legislated in 1971, Oregon's Beverage Container Act ("Bottle Bill") is a quarter-century success story. Within four years after implementation, 90 percent of Oregonians favored the law, and it continues to be one of the most popular pieces of legislation ever passed in the state. When passed the bill was viewed primarily as a litter control measure and indeed, litter has been substantially reduced across Oregon's landscape. After the bill's first year, nearly four million fewer beverage containers had been thrown away than the year before. Within two years, litter from beverage containers had dropped by 83 percent. Within 15 years, beverage containers accounted for only four percent of roadside litter, down from 40 percent prior to the Bottle Bill. Most impressively, the bill created a broader anti-litter ethic. Within two years, Oregon's roadside litter was cut almost in half.

As impressive as litter reduction has been, the affect the bill has had on waste reduction and resource conservation has proven to be its most remarkable feature. During the last 25 years in Oregon, return rates for beverage containers have exceeded 90 percent, resulting in substantial natural resource and energy savings and a lessening landfill demand.

Current Provisions

Beer and soft drink containers must have the five cent refund value clearly marked; paid by distributor to dealer, and by dealer to consumer.

- No beverage may be sold in containers with "pull tab" openers.
- Plastic six-pack rings must be designed to decompose within 120 days of disposal (1977 amendment).
- Dealers and distributors must accept and refund deposits on all the beverage container brands they sell. They may refuse excessively dirty empties and/or more than 144 containers returned by any one person in one day.

Deposit System

Deposits on refillable containers begin with the brewer or bottler, and with the distributor on single-use containers. The system reverses when consumers return empties for refunds. At the store, empties are sorted and counted then collected by the distributor for recycling. The Bottle Bill has no provision for a handling fee to compensate retailers. However, brewers, bottlers and distributors are allowed to keep unredeemed deposits. (About ten percent of containers are not returned.) Income from returned container sales for recycling generally goes to the distributor. (See Unredeemed Deposits Fact Sheet)

The Oregon Liquor Control Commission (OLCC) administers and enforces the Bottle Bill. Beverage manufacturers, distributors, and stores with questions about the bottle bill should contact the OLCC (503) 872-5071. Individuals with complaints or questions about the Bottle Bill implementation by individual stores or beverage companies should contact their local field offices at (800) 452-6522. Portland metropolitan residents may dial 872-5000.



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