IOWA’S BOTTLE DEPOSIT LAW IS A SUCCESS

Since its inception in 1978, Iowans have benefitted from the bottle deposit law. It should not be dismantled now. We are all familiar with paying a nickel deposit on plastic, glass, and metal pop and alcohol containers which is returned to us when we bring the empty bottles back to the store.

The Bottle Deposit law is Popular. In fact, Iowans support expanding the bottle deposit law to include other beverage containers.

Iowans are universally supportive of Iowa’s bottle deposit law. A 2022 poll of Iowans conducted by Selzer & Co. showed that

- 84% of Iowans said the recycling law is good for the state.
- 80% said the state should keep the law as it is, or expand it to include more types of eligible containers and more retail locations where empty containers can be returned. Of those, 61% said expand the bottle deposit law, while 19% said they favor keeping the law as it is.
- 86% support adding places that will accept empty containers.
- 72% support increasing fees on stores and redemption centers to cover the program costs.
- 71% are in favor of adding more types of containers to the bottle deposit law.
- 51% support increasing the deposit from 5 cents to 10 cents.

The bottle deposit law diverts containers from the landfill and into recycled products. Further by encouraging recycling, less litter is strewn across the state.

- Redeeming plastic, glass, and metal pop and alcohol containers provides an incentive to keep discarded containers out of roadside ditches and public areas.
- Returning beverage containers reduces the amount of waste that must be buried in landfills.
- Using the returned containers to create new products uses less energy than using virgin raw materials.
- The bottle deposit law even provides spending money to those who collect discarded bottles and cans.
- The bottle deposit law provides jobs to 870 Iowans who are involved in the recovery process.

1 Iowa’s bottle deposit law is also referred to as “the bottle bill”.
2 Erin Murphy, “Poll: 84% of Iowans support bottle bill”, Cedar Rapids Gazette, March 9, 2022
3 www.iowabottlebill.com/bottle-bill-facts/
The bottle deposit law has been a success!

In Iowa 71% of the beverage containers are recycled; while nationally only 29% of the containers are recycled.4 Of the containers recovered in Iowa:5

- 83% of the glass bottles are recovered
- 69% of the aluminum cans are recovered
- 60% of the Polyethylene Terephthalate plastic (PET) carbonated bottles

How the bottle deposit law works

The steps in charging deposits for alcohol and soft drinks are:

- The distributor charges 5 cents for each container delivered to the retailer
- The retailer charges the customer 5 cents for each container purchased
- When the customer returns empty bottles or cans to a retailer or to a redemption center, the customer is given 5 cents for each container.
- The distributor collects the empty containers from the retailer or the redemption center. The distributor pays 6 cents for each container – returning the 5-cent deposit and adding a 1-cent handling fee.

Continue and Expand the Bottle Deposit law

- The Iowa Chapter supports continuing the bottle deposit law and expanding it to include water bottles, iced tea, sports drinks and juice bottles.
- It is time to raise the deposit fee from a nickel to a dime.
- It is also time to increase the handling fee from one cent to two cents. Unfortunately the handling fees have not been raised while the costs of handling the empty bottles of cans have increased. Redemption centers are finding it difficult to remain in business.6
- The distance between a store and a redemption center should remain at 10 minutes. This distance is often called the convenience standard.
- Finally, the Department of Natural Resources should be given the ability and authority to enforce the bottle deposit law.

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4 “Rod Boshart, “Poll: Iowans favor deposit law”, Cedar Rapids Gazette, March 10, 2017, statistic provided by Mick Barry, President, MidAmerica Recycling
5 “Study shows new recovery rate of containers in Iowa”, press release from Iowa Department of Natural Resources, January 18, 2018 and www.iowabottlebill.com/bottle-bill-facts/
6 James Q. Lynch, “Economist: Bottle law is ‘falling apart’ after 40 years”, Cedar Rapids Gazette, February 8, 2019