IOWA’S BOTTLE DEPOSIT LAW IS A SUCCESS

Since its inception in 1978, Iowans have benefitted from the bottle deposit law.¹ 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 January, 2018, poll of Iowans² shows that:

- 53% of Republicans favor keeping the bottle bill as it is or expanding it
- 60% of Democrats favor keeping the bottle bill as it is or expanding it
- 61% of independents favor keeping the bottle bill as it is or expanding it
- 61% of Iowans over the age of 65 favor keeping the bottle bill as it is or expanding it

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.

¹ Iowa’s bottle deposit law is also referred to as “the bottle bill”.
² William Petroski, “Iowa Poll: Most want bottle bill kept or expanded”, Des Moines Register, February 7, 2018
• 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.  

The bottle deposit law has been a success!

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

- 83 percent of the glass bottles are recovered
- 69 percent of the aluminum cans are recovered
- 60 percent 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 also time to increase the handling fees. 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.

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3 www.iowabottlebill.com/bottle-bill-facts/
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