FACT SHEET

RETAIL COMPLIANCE CENTER

BEVERAGE CONTAINER DEPOSIT LEGISLATION

SUMMARY

Container deposit laws or bottle bills require a monetary deposit (usually 5 or 10 cents) at the point of sale on designated beverages to incentivize return of the bottle for recycling. The goal of bottle bills is to reduce litter and increase reuse and recycling rates. Bottle bills have proven to be effective: states with bottle bills average beverage container recycling rates of 60% while states without bottle bills average less than half of that rate. In addition, bottle bills produce a clean, low-contamination stream of recyclables for end markets.

The first bottle bill was passed in Oregon in 1971 in response to the industry's move away from reusable/refillable beverage bottles and toward disposable ones. Today, there are bottle bills in ten U.S. states.

AM I A COVERED BUSINESS?

Bottle deposit laws require participation from "dealers", typically defined as any person or retail establishment that offers the sale of beverages in beverage containers to consumers.

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS?

Requirements for retailers vary based on the state. In general, retailers are required to submit a deposit on every can or bottle purchased from a distributor and collect a deposit for every can or bottle sold to a consumer. In addition, retailers may be required to collect covered beverage containers from consumers through redemption centers or reverse vending machines. In some cases, the retailer may recoup a handling fee from the distributor in addition to the full deposit to help offset handling expenses.

IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF BOTTLE BILLS

Bottle bill laws vary state by state according to the following components:

- Deposit Amount
- Beverages Covered
- Containers Covered
- Handling Fees
- Unredeemed Deposits

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The table below lists deposit return legislation in the U.S.

State	Details	Covered Products
California	Beverage Container Recycling and Litter Reduction Act Link to Text | Agency Info	• Beer & malt beverages • Carbonated soft drinks & mineral water • All other non-alcoholic beverages • Wine coolers & distilled spirits coolers • Excluded: milk, some juices, wine, and spirits
Connecticut	Beverage Container Deposit and Redemption Link to Text | Agency Info	• Beer & malt beverages • Carbonated soft drinks & mineral water • Bottled water including flavored water
Hawaii	Deposit Beverage Container Program Link to Text | Agency Info	• Beer & malt beverages • Carbonated soft drinks & mineral water • All other non-alcoholic beverages • Wine coolers & distilled spirits coolers • Excluded: milk, wine, and spirits
Iowa	Beverage Containers Control Link to Text | Agency Info	• Beer & malt beverages • Carbonated soft drinks & mineral water • Wine coolers • Wine & liquor
Maine	Manufacturers, Distributors, and Dealers of Beverage Containers Link to Text | Agency Info	• All beverages except dairy products and unprocessed cider
Massachusetts	Provisions for Recycling of Beverage Containers (Bottle Bill) Link to Text | Agency Info	• Beer & malt beverages • Carbonated soft drinks & mineral water
Michigan	Bottle Deposit Law Link to Text | Agency Info	• Beer & malt beverages • Carbonated soft drinks, mineral water, and kombucha • Wine coolers & distilled spirits coolers

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New York	New York Returnable Container Law Link to Text | Agency Info	• Beer & malt beverages • Carbonated soft drinks & mineral water • Bottled water including flavored water • Wine coolers
Oregon	Beverage Containers and Bottle Bill Link to Text | Agency Info	• All beverages except wine, distilled liquor, dairy milk, plant-based milk, and infant formula
Vermont	Beverage Container Deposit-Redemption System Link to Text | Agency Info	• Beer & malt beverages • Carbonated soft drinks & mineral water • Wine coolers • Liquor

Disclaimer: Information in the tables above is meant to be a reference tool and may not be exhaustive of all legislation in the U.S. The information provides a summary and does not convey all aspects of legislated requirements. For example, the summaries do not necessarily include definition of terms, information on outreach and education requirements, penalties and enforcement, reporting, or instructions on how to comply. Links to legislation are accurate as of the date of this publication. Retailers should reference official agency resources and/or the appropriate legislative documents for comprehensive guidance.

Prepared by RRS. Founded in 1986 and headquartered in Ann Arbor, Michigan, RRS is a sustainability and recycling consulting firm that strives to create a world where resources are managed to maximize economic and social benefit while minimizing environmental harm.

The firm has industry professionals, engineers, economists, technical analysts, and communication specialists who share this vision and possess core strengths in materials and recovery, life cycle management, applied sustainable design, and collaborative action development.

ABOUT THE RETAIL COMPLIANCE CENTER

The Retail Compliance Center (RCC) provides resources on environmental compliance and sustainability for all types and sizes of retailers. The RCC's goal is to develop retail-specific resources, tools and innovative solutions to help companies cost-effectively improve their compliance and environmental performance.

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