

# Bottle Bills

## What Are Bottle Bills?

A bottle bill, also called a beverage container deposit law, is a program that levies a small, refundable deposit on beverage containers, such as bottles and cans at the point of sale.

Consumers can get their deposit back when they return the empty container for recycling. Bottle bills are implemented with the intent to reduce litter in communities and ensure that more containers are collected for recycling.

## How It Works:



### Deposit at Purchase:

When a consumer buys a beverage, a small refundable deposit (typically 5 or 10 cents) is added to the purchase price of each container.



### Return of Containers:

Once the beverage is consumed, the empty container can be returned to a designated redemption location. These may include reverse vending machines, in-store collection points, or dedicated recycling centers where available.



### Refund of Deposit:

Upon return, the consumer receives their deposit back either as cash or store credit, depending on the redemption location's system.



### Collection and Sorting:

The redeemed containers are gathered and sorted by material type (such as aluminum, glass, or plastic) to prepare them for proper recycling.



### Recycling and Processing:

Finally, the sorted materials are sent to recycling facilities, where they are processed and transformed into new products or packaging, completing the circular process.



### Unredeemed Deposits:

Also referred to as escheats, can be retained by the state or retailer or used to assist in program administration as determined by the specific bottle deposit law.

## Why It Matters:

### For the Environment

- **Higher Recycling Rates** – States with bottle bills have recorded return rates of over 90%, far higher than collection by curbside-only systems. Since 2015, Great Lakes states with bottle bills (NY and MI) have recorded an average return rate of 74%.
- **Cleaner Recycling Stream** – Returned containers tend to be less contaminated, making them more valuable to recyclers.
- **Less Litter** – Programs incentivize keeping valuable resources like aluminum cans and PET plastic bottles in the economy instead of being discarded and ending up in landfills or the environment.

### For the Economy

- **Job Creation** – Creates jobs in collection, processing, and recycling.
- **Improved Feedstock** – Provides higher-quality recyclable feedstock to local manufacturing.
- **Cost Savings** – Reduces municipal waste management costs by lowering litter cleanup expenses, diverting beverage containers from curbside collection and landfill disposal, and improving recycling rates thus reducing strain on taxpayer-funded waste and recycling systems.

