

The Oregon Bottle Bill

Background

The Oregon Bottle Bill put an end to “No deposit - No return” in Oregon. This law, passed in 1971, requires that all beer and carbonated soft drink containers be returnable and have a minimum refund value. It reduced litter, increased container recycling, and fostered a recycling ethic among Oregonians that helped pave the way for future recycling efforts. After 30 years, it is still one of Oregon’s most effective recycling systems.

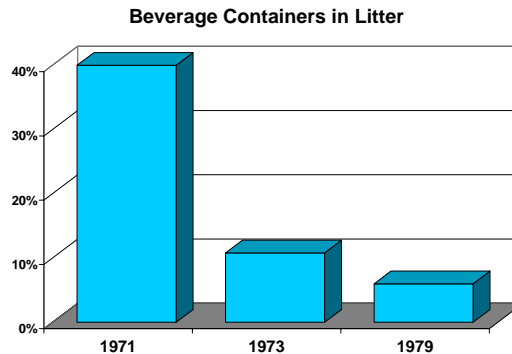
How the Deposit System Works

Every beer or carbonated soft drink container sold in Oregon must have a minimum refund value. Deposits begin with the distributor and are refunded to the customer when the empty container is returned. At the store, empties are sorted and counted, then collected by the distributor for recycling. Containers that are discarded by the consumer rather than returned to the store are often recovered from solid waste and then returned for their refund value by someone else.

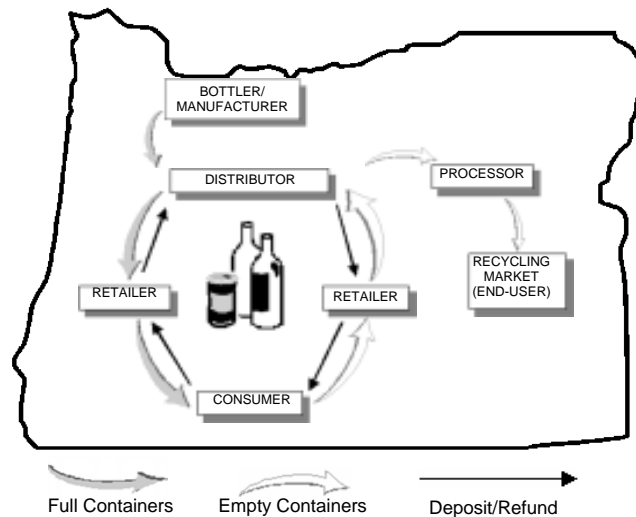
Specific Provisions of the Law

- ◆ The deposit/refund applies to all beer and carbonated soft drink containers;
- ◆ Containers must be labeled with their minimum refund value. Most containers carry a \$.05 refund value;
- ◆ Retailers must provide customers with a full refund for redeemed containers;
- ◆ Distributors must provide retailers with a refund for redeemed containers;
- ◆ Retailers may refuse to accept and pay refunds for excessively dirty empty containers or more than 144 containers from one person per day;
- ◆ Anyone may establish a redemption center to represent one or more retailers; and
- ◆ There are potential criminal and administrative penalties for violation of the law.

Effects of the Bottle Bill



When passed by the Oregon Legislature, the Bottle Bill was viewed primarily as a litter control measure. As a result of the law, litter has been substantially reduced across Oregon’s roadsides and landscape. Before passage of the Bottle Bill in 1971, beverage containers made up as much as 40% of roadside litter. By 1973, after passage of the law, they were only 10.8%, and by 1979 they were down to 6%. This level of litter reduction continues to this day, and the Bottle Bill has created a broader anti-litter ethic that has led to reductions in other types of litter.



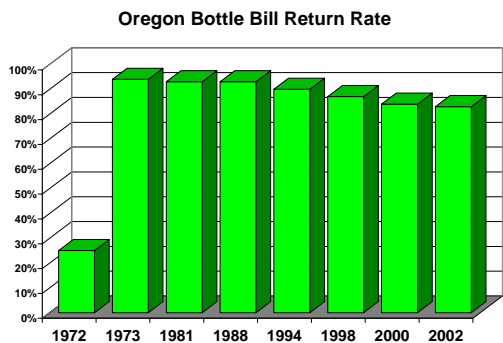
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Return Rates

As impressive as litter reduction has been, the effect the law has had on waste reduction and resource conservation has proven to be its most remarkable feature. During the last 30 years, beverage container return rates in Oregon have been about 90%. Return rates in 1972, prior to the Bottle Bill, were less than 25%. After the Bottle Bill passed, return rates increased dramatically: 94% - 1973, 93% - 1981 and 1988, 90% - 1994, 87% - 1998, 84% - 2000, and 83% - 2002. These high return rates result in substantial savings of natural resources and energy, particularly for aluminum cans. Recycling rates in states that do not have Bottle Bills average about 30%.



Recycling and Solid Waste

A careful evaluation of solid waste disposal indicates that about 17% of the deposit beverage containers used in Oregon are disposed of in landfills. About 1.2 billion containers are recovered and recycled each year. The success of the Bottle Bill has been a foundation for other recycling programs. Oregon's recycling programs, including the Bottle Bill, have resulted in a statewide municipal solid waste recovery rate of 43% in 2002.

Unredeemed Deposits

Even with approximately 83% of deposit containers returned, there is still a substantial sum of unredeemed beverage container deposits in Oregon. DEQ estimates that about 220 to 270 million beverage containers, with deposits worth \$11-13.5 million, are discarded in Oregon's landfills each year. In addition, an unknown number of containers are recycled through curbside and other recycling programs without being redeemed for their nickel deposit. The beverage distributors hold all of these unredeemed deposits. State government does not receive any of these funds.

Public Support

Strong public support was one of the key factors in the passage of the Bottle Bill. Even four years after implementation, 90% of Oregonians favored the law. That level of support continues today, and the Bottle Bill remains one of the most popular pieces of legislation ever passed in the state.

For More Information

[Oregon Bottle Bill Law ORS 459A.700 – 740](#)

DEQ's Bottle Bill Questions and Answers web page:

<http://www.deq.state.or.us/wmc/solwaste/bottlebillQ&A.html>

The Oregon Liquor Control Commission (OLCC) administers and enforces the Bottle Bill.

- Beverage manufacturers, distributors, and stores with questions should contact the OLCC at 503-872-5217.
- Individuals with complaints or questions should contact their local OLCC field office at 1-800-452-6522. Portland area residents may dial 503-872-5217.

OLCC Rules: [OAR 845 Division 20](#)

Other Information

- ◆ The minimum refund value, \$.05, has remained unchanged since 1972;
- ◆ While redemption centers are allowed under the law, none have been established;
- ◆ There is no per-container handling fee established in the law;
- ◆ Money from the deposit/refund system remains entirely in the private sector, and unclaimed deposits are retained by the distributor or bottler;
- ◆ Income from sale of recyclable material is retained by the distributor, manufacturer, or a private recycling firm;
- ◆ No government employees are dedicated to implementation of the Bottle Bill; and
- ◆ There is no tax, fee, or other government income associated with this law.

For more information on how the Bottle Bill relates to Oregon's waste reduction and recycling programs, contact the Department of Environmental Quality's Solid Waste Policy and Program Development Section, 811 SW Sixth Avenue, Portland, OR 97204, 503-229-5913 or toll-free in Oregon, 1-800-452-4011.

Alternative Formats

Alternative formats of this document can be made available. Contact DEQ Public Affairs for more information at 503-229-5696.