WRRA

Vote NO Bottle Tax (HB 1607 / SB 5502)

There are only 10 bottle deposit programs in the United States. With the exception of Hawaii (2002), no state has adopted this archaic policy since 1986 and the average age of programs founded before curbside service adoption is 47 years.
In 2025, the legislature adopted the Recycling Reform Act (RRA) with the goal of improving recycling by requiring packaging producers to help fund recycling costs. But producers won't pay to improve recycling, consumers will. We're already remaking our recycling system and a bottle bill will just increase costs and reduce convenience for Washingtonians by slapping a new tax on every bottle purchased. Curbside service continues to offer greater consumer convenience and cost transparency without hidden regressive fees inherent to bottle deposit programs. Recently, bottle deposit programs in states like Oregon have come under increasing scrutiny:

"2 downtown Portland bottle return locations suspend service to fight fentanyl crisis" 2/19/24

The Oregonian

"…parts of the city…have struggled with crime and livability issues connected to Bottle Bill redemption centers."

"Corporate Lobbyists Turned Oregon's Iconic Bottle Bill Into a Sweet Payday For Their Clients" 2/17/24

WW WILLAMETTE WEEK

"When the deposit for returnable cans and bottles goes up, the environment may not win. But private companies will."

Adopting a Bottle Deposit Program would:

- **Increase grocery costs** for families during a period of high inflation. Grocery bills are already expected to increase 10% due to the RRA adopted in 2025. Every bottle purchase would charge an additional 10-cent fee that could only be recovered if a consumer saved their bottle, walked past their curbside recycling bin and drove to a deposit center to drop it off. This regressive tax would increase the cost of a 24-pack of 8oz water bottles at Costco by almost 50% (customers currently pay $4.99).

- **Undermine Washington's successful recycling system** that is already achieving a 49% overall recovery rate, which is 50% above the national average – we also recycle at least 40% of our packaging materials. Decades of private & public investment in curbside recycling would be lost and provide less convenience for the public. A bottle bill will cost consumers millions and is expected to increase our recycling rate by less than 1%.

- **Protect profits for bottle producers** because all unredeemed bottle fees would be retained by the producer organization overseeing the bottle deposit program. Millions in unredeemed deposits are the profit motive that keeps these programs afloat for bottle producers in other states. Bottle producers in Oregon keep up to $40 million per year in unclaimed consumer money. Nationally, it's even worse: unredeemed deposits nationally total almost $1 billion. Bottle producers are also shielded from anti-trust laws. Bottle producers can already buy their containers back from recyclers, but want to use consumer money instead of their own.

- **Burden restaurants and hospitality workers** with collecting and storing bottles that can already be readily recycled through existing commercial recycling services. At a time when restaurants continue to grapple with the effects of the pandemic and record inflation, this is not the time to add a new cost.

THE DAILY Herald
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"While such a program might seem to incentivize return of glass and plastic bottles and metal beverage cans up to one gallon, the legislation would duplicate a collection system already in place with curbside and drop-off recycling…"

"In Our View" Editorial: Encourage recycling by increasing use of material

March 1, 2025

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