

Should We Get Money for Recycling Cans and Bottles?

In 10 states, it pays to recycle. These states have “bottle bills,” or laws that allow people to get money back for recycling bottles and cans. Customers pay an extra 5 or 10 cents as a deposit when they buy certain beverages. (Types of containers and amounts of deposits vary by state.) People get the deposits back if they bring empty bottles and cans to a return center.

The first bottle bill went into effect in Oregon in 1971. Similar laws were passed in several other states over the next few decades. Bottle bills have been effective in getting people to recycle more. In the 10 states that have bottle bills, the average recycling rate for bottles and cans is about 70 percent. However, in the 40 other states, that rate is less than 30 percent.

Bottle bills are popular in states that have them. Last year, a poll in Iowa showed that 88 percent of voters support that state’s bottle bill. The biggest reason is that it’s helped cut down on litter. Some lawmakers in Iowa are now trying to expand the bottle bill to include sports drink and water bottles.



But many people say bottle bills are no longer needed. Many states now have universal recycling programs. People separate recyclable items into bins or bags and leave them on the curb to be picked up by sanitation workers. Some people argue that it’s a waste of money for states to have bottle bills and also run universal recycling programs.

People who are opposed to bottle bills say leaving all recyclables in one place is easier than returning bottles and cans separately. That’s one of the main reasons Delaware ditched its bottle bill in 2010 and started curbside recycling.

Here’s what two of our readers think.

Yes! Getting money back encourages people to recycle.

Bottle bills give people an extra reason to keep our planet clean. In California, we get money back for recycling cans and different types of plastic beverage containers. This has encouraged me not only to recycle my own bottles and cans, but also to pick up others I find on the ground as litter.

Bottle bills can also help raise money for charities. For example, in Connecticut, people donate bottles and cans to a group called Cans 4 Kids. The group returns the recyclables and donates most of the money it gets back to the Connecticut Children’s Medical Center. So far, the group has donated more than \$250,000.



Ricardo Rodriguez III, California

No! Helping the environment is reward enough for recycling.

I’m glad we don’t have bottle deposit laws in Virginia. These laws give people money back only for recycling bottles and cans, which make up a small portion of our trash. Why not pay people to return other items, like paper? Paper makes up more than one-quarter of all trash in the U.S., far more than bottles and cans.

Plus, universal recycling programs are more convenient. You don’t have to bring bags of cans or bottles to a return center. You can simply drop all your recyclables into a bin at home or at school, and someone picks them up. Also, you don’t have to pay 5 cents more for your drinks, and your cans and bottles still get recycled!



Belle Sears, Virginia

What’s Your OPINION? Go online to cast your vote and download an opinion-writing skills sheet: www.scholastic.com/sn56

POSTAL INFORMATION: SCHOLASTIC NEWS Edition 5/6 (ISSN 1554-2440) is published weekly during the school year except holidays and mid-term, 22 issues, by Scholastic Inc. 2931 East McCarty St., P.O. Box 3710, Jefferson City, MO 65102-3710. Periodical postage paid at Jefferson City, MO 65102 and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTERS: Send notice of address changes to SCHOLASTIC NEWS Edition 5/6, 2931 East McCarty St., P.O. Box 3710, Jefferson City, MO 65102-3710. Copyright ©2014 by Scholastic Inc. Scholastic News and associated designs are trademarks/registered trademarks of Scholastic Inc. All Rights Reserved. Materials in this issue may not be reproduced in whole or in part in any form or format without special permission from the publisher. Printed in the USA.

