

## California Beverage Container Recycling Program

California's Bottle Bill has been one of the most successful and cost-effective recycling and litter-reduction programs in the United States, targeting aluminum, glass, plastic, and bimetal containers.

The container recycling program works through a deposit/refund mechanism. Every time a beverage is purchased, consumers pay a California Redemption Value (CRV) deposit ranging from 5-25 cents, depending on the size and composition of the container. The state then returns the money when the container is brought to a recycler – either to consumers when they recycle at a redemption center or store, or to a hauler or non-profit recycler when disposed via curbside recycling. Unclaimed deposits from unreturned containers go into the state's Beverage Recycling Container Fund, which is intended to support recycling centers, reduce litter, and provide grants for new recycling initiatives.

California's Bottle Bill has many extended producer responsibility elements, including the processing payment/fee which recyclers receive, that offsets the cost differential between the cost to recycle that container type and the value that type of recycled material would fetch on the marketplace (its "scrap price"). Because the processing fee is much higher for difficult-to-recycle container types like #3-7 plastic, California's Bottle Bill incentivizes manufacturers to design their products with recyclability in mind.

Despite its potential, the program faces a range of challenges, foremost of which is the widespread closure of redemption centers. California has lost half of its bottle return recycling centers in the last 10 years, leaving fewer than 1,200 remaining statewide. This is the result of a drop in financial support for California's recycling infrastructure, largely due to falling scrap values and an outdated state subsidy formula that results in severe underpayments to redemption centers. Not only does the lack of access to centers decrease the potential recycling rate for beverage containers, some community members rely on this income to sustain their livelihood.

A number of efforts are underway to revive the program, including policy changes that expand eligible CRV containers to wine and liquor and adds stricter requirements for retailer participation in the program to ensure that community members have access to convenient recycling locations.

**482 BILLION**  
beverage containers have been recycled in California since 1987.

That's an average of  
cans and bottles per  
person per year. **400**

**70%** of all beverage containers sold in California get collected and recycled, which prevents

**300,000 tons**  
of greenhouse gas emissions every year.

Recycling an aluminium can requires

**95% less energy**

than one made from virgin materials,  
and can be back on the shelf in under

**60 days.**

### Key New Changes to California's Bottle Bill

- Adds wine and liquor containers including boxed wine and pouches, along with large fruit and vegetable juice containers.
- Requires most larger stores to offer in-store recycling if there's no nearby recycling center; adds option for retailers to join a nonprofit dealer cooperative that redeems on their behalf.
- Removes the option for stores to pay a fee instead of accepting containers; increases fines for violations of recycling laws.
- Introduces new grant programs to strengthen and support the circular economy of beverage containers.

Additional information about California's Bottle Bill is available on [CalRecycle's website](#).