

## Why Isn't There a National Bottle Law?

Our country faces an important problem, yet it's one that few people take seriously -- what to do with the bottles and cans we use daily. When thrown away, bottles and cans cause pollution, increase the volume of solid wastes, waste energy, and use up natural resources. To control these problems only nine states have adopted bottle laws. What a shame.

If you're like me, you're tired of walking down streets and seeing fast-food wrappers, bottles and cans. Last week I went to the coast and found a beautiful isolated beach. It was great until I came upon some hamburger boxes and beer bottles. This happened with a bottle law. Think how much worse things would be if Oregon didn't have a bottle law.

Bottle laws are important because they require recycling, and recycling reduces pollution and solid waste. Recycling aluminum reduces air emissions associated with aluminum production by 96 percent. Solid waste would reduce as aluminum and glass are eliminated from landfills. Also, a large percentage of the pollution on and around streets and highways is bottles and cans. If these cans and bottles were worth some money, people would be less likely to throw them away.

Extracting aluminum ore requires twenty-times as much electricity as recycling the metal. Therefore, if we recycled more aluminum then less aluminum ore would have to be extracted. This would save enough energy to provide electrical power for at least two million people annually.

Bottle laws are currently effective in Oregon, Vermont, Maine, Michigan, Iowa, Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, and New York. These laws work largely because of the legislation's support by the people. Of the Americans polled, 73 percent would support such bottle laws. Some people are getting tired of the environment being polluted and abused and now realize that this planet and its resources are finite. Aluminum is a natural resource and without recycling we will eventually run out.

With all the people in favor and the obvious environmental reasons supporting it, one would think that a national bottle law would have started long ago. But some people just don't want to bother with saving their containers, and it is a lot easier to just throw them away, despite the fact that they're worth five cents each. Steel and aluminum companies unfairly attack bottle bill laws -- and so do supermarkets. These biased efforts must be stopped now.

Although 54 percent of the aluminum beverage cans made and used in the U.S. are recycled at more than twenty-five hundred recycling centers, this could be increased to as much as 90 percent by requiring a national bottle law. Instead of considering unions' and companies' losses for a basis of decision on the bottle law, we should consider the ecological gains. In the future, a few dollars saved will mean nothing compared to a polluted and destroyed environment society will face without recycling.