



Overview

In the past few years, recycling system conditions in the U.S. have eroded significantly. Contributing factors include falling oil prices, the near total stoppage ban of plastic exports through China's National Sword policy and industry fluctuations related to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the [EPA](#), only 8.7% of plastics are recycled in the United States. The remaining plastic is incinerated, landfilled, or could be used to supply plastic-to-fuel or [chemical recycling](#), all of which are harmful to our health and environment.

Deposit return systems (DRSs) or bottle bills decrease litter to help bring healthier, cleaner communities. DRS is a producer-financed system that places a refundable deposit on beverage containers made from common materials like plastic, glass, and metal. Designed as an economic incentive, customers pay a small fee on the purchase of certain beverage containers, which they get back in full when they return the empty container to a convenient and easily accessible collection point.

Legislation

- [California A.B. 2779 \(2022\)](#): This bill expands the California Beverage Container Recycling and Litter Reduction Act to include wine and distilled spirits.
- [Vermont H.175 \(2022\)](#): This bill aims to increase the scope of the state's deposit program that would cover almost all beverages, including bottled water and wine.
- [Connecticut S.B.1037 \(2021\)](#): This bill is designed to update Connecticut's first container deposit law that was enacted in 1978. By 2023 the state will accept more types of containers and increase bottle deposit values from 5 cents to 10 cents by 2024.

KEY POINTS

- States that have DRS and attach a monetary value to beverage containers, have substantially less litter than that of non-DRS states. ([Keep America Beautiful](#))
- Modernized DRSs regularly exceed 80% redemption rates. ([Eunomia](#))
- A recent study found that 8 of the top 10 U.S. states for recycling have a DRS. ([Eunomia](#))
- Bottle bills not only reduce litter and emissions, but also stimulate local economies through job creation. ([Circular Charlotte](#))

Other Resources

- [Sure We Can](#) is a non-profit recycling center, community and sustainability space in Brooklyn, New York. At Sure We Can, people who collect cans, or canners, collect cans and bottles from NY streets to support recycling, composting, gardening, and arts.
- 2020 National Litter Study ([Keep America Beautiful](#))
- A Tale of Five Cities: Plastic Barriers to Zero Waste ([GAIA](#))

