



**Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy
(JTU)**

H.3676, H.3690/S.2104– An Act to expand the Bottle Bill

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We have a waste problem. And while the League’s position is that much more regulatory attention needs to be paid to stopping waste at the point of generation, we also need to address the waste that is already with us. Six million tons of waste are disposed of in MA annually. Over 94 thousand tons of this waste consists of beverage containers that litter parks, beaches, waterways and streets. This is waste that we can do something about with an updated, expanded bottle bill.

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts (LWVMA) supported the original bottle bill enacted in 1982. A lot has changed in the beverage container world and society at large since then. The League has continued its support of common-sense legislation advocating for legislation to update the bill to match current realities. While the 1982 law was appropriate to the time and type of single use beverages prevalent 40 years ago, it is not appropriate for the huge increase in single use containers on the market today. As of 2018, 6.7 billion containers are sold annually in Massachusetts. Over half of these containers, (58%/3.8 billion) are not covered by the bottle bill. 2.9 billion (76%) of these uncovered containers are burned or buried, harming our health and the health of our ecosystems by adding to existing air and water pollution.

In addition to the issue of litter, discarded containers are also a waste of resources and energy, a critical factor as we face the threat of accelerating climate change and the Commonwealth’s commitment to achieving 100% net zero emissions by 2050.

Plastic, now viewed by the fossil fuel industry as its lifeline as we transition off fossil fuels for transportation and heating, presents a host of issues. Plastic bottles are made primarily from fossil fuels and do not reflect the life-cycle cost of the associated intensive and polluting extraction, transportation and processing involved in their production. Thinner plastic bottles are a form of green washing; they are not a solution. Requiring their capture with a better bottle bill is a form of accountability, so absent in this industry.

New uses are being found for recycled glass which is 100% recyclable without any loss in quality. Adding just 10% recycled glass content to new glass containers would reduce CO₂ emissions from that process.

Recycling aluminum, the most valuable of the recyclable materials, saves 90% of the energy used in manufacturing new aluminum.

In addition to covering more types of containers – consistent with containers available today – the updated bottle bill will increase handling fees for redemption centers, a feature that can revitalize the recycling industry in Massachusetts and make the redemption system more convenient for consumers. The bill also increases the bottle deposit from 5¢ to 10¢, a consumer “cost” that will be returned when bottles are deposited.

While we grapple with the growing issue of waste generation in the US, it makes sense to do what we can to strengthen recycling via a stronger, “age-appropriate”, redemption system.

We face a huge challenge across a multitude of sectors to decrease emissions as rapidly and completely as possible to meet mandated state goals on behalf of a healthy, sustainable and livable future. An updated bottle bill is not a silver bullet – none exist for issues of this magnitude – but it is a doable, meaningful action that moves us in a better direction. Isn’t it time to bring the Bottle Bill in line with the reality of our time?

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts and our 44 local Leagues serving over 100 communities from Cape Cod to the Berkshires urge you to report H.3676, H.3690/S.2104 favorably.