

With Petition, Farmers Can Have Voices Heard

What Would Bottle Bill Mean To Beverage Manufacturers, Other Industries?

Last Of A Series

Editor's Note: Are there alternatives to a state bottle bill? Answers are conflicting. But experts who have studied litter problems in rural areas understand the difficulties of using a "no bottle bill" approach. Bottle bills in other states have proven widely successful in reducing bottle and can litter. Now farmers can have their voices heard through a petition they can send to their legislators. The statewide organization that supports farmers and bottle bill legislation says it's about time.

ANDY ANDREWS

Lancaster Farming Staff
PERKASIE (Bucks Co.) — Rep. Paul Clymer (R-145th) believes the answer to the problems of bottles and cans in Pennsylvania farm fields lies in Texas.

That's right, Texas. The Lone Star State has pioneered a program that targets not the industries that produce bottles and cans which end up in fields, but the people responsible for putting the trash there in the first place.

Within the next year, Clymer indicated his office will help coordinate a workshop to discuss a program spearheaded by the Texas Department of Transportation that targets what they believe are the purveyors of trash in fields — 18-35-year-old males.

The Texas program makes heavy use of radio and TV ads that bring in respectable role models to essentially tell the guys "don't mess with Texas — don't litter," said Clymer.

Texas has no bottle bill. But, according to Clymer, the Texas transportation department insists that the campaigns, funded through the department with financial assistance from the bottling, distributor, and retailer industries, actually work.

"Irresponsible people do litter," said Clymer. "This program is an attempt to solve the problems of litter in fields without having to put the responsibility on the people not responsible for the problems to begin with."

Clymer, who did not have a specified date for the Texas program workshop as of presstime, believes education is the key. However, opponents of the Texas plan wonder about the "nontarget" audience — females, those under 18 or over 35, or those who simply don't see or hear the media spots.

Clymer actually co-sponsored Pennsylvania's Bottle Bill H.B. 922 with Rep. Arthur Hershey (R-13th) and 53 co-sponsors. In order for a Pennsylvania program that is modeled on the Texas campaign to work, "we need people from Texas to come in" and show how it can be done successfully.

Does education work? Just ask George Moyer, dairyman from Myerstown.

Education, noted Moyer, is not enough. "If education would solve the problem, we wouldn't have a drug problem, either," he said.

Or ask Peter Spendelov, waste reduction specialist with the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). The Oregon DEQ has recently completed a study that examined 144 roadside litter sites.

Spendelov, working in Oregon

(the first state to pass bottle bill legislation in 1971), said the study, patterned after a 1979 study he conducted as a graduate student working at the University of Washington, could show similar results. One result of the 1979 study showed that containers marked with a deposit refund "disappeared from the site," compared to nondeposit items, said Spendelov.

Results of the recent study will be available in a few months.

Oregon's Bottle Bill has been highly successful, according to studies by the Glass Packaging Institute. The institute announced that the 1995 U.S. glass recycling rate remained at 37 percent. Another institute, the Container Recycling Institute, responded by releasing the results of a survey showing that the glass recycling rate is more than twice as high in bottle bill states compared to those without a bottle bill. According to the survey, approximately two million of the total of four million tons of glass recycled in the U.S. in 1994 came from the states with a deposit system.

The U.S. lags far behind seven countries, who recycle more than 47 percent of their glass containers. The U.S. and three other European nations recycle glass bottles and jars at the rate of 37 percent or less.

That equates to millions of tons of glass not showing up in farm fields, destroying equipment and cows, and costing farmers millions of dollars in repairs, animal replacement, and wasted productivity.

But the Pennsylvania Soft Drink Association, lobbyist for 33 soft drink bottlers with facilities in Pennsylvania, opposes any bottle bill. They claim the passage of the bill will put jobs in jeopardy.

John P. Kolb Jr., vice president of human resources of the Philadelphia Coca Cola Bottling Company, testified in April at the Pennsylvania House State Government Committee Public Hearing on H.B. 922, Pennsylvania's proposed bottle bill. Speaking on behalf of the association, Kolb said the Philadelphia company he works for is the second largest minority owned business in the United States and the seventh largest Coca Cola bottler.

Kolb noted that curbside recycling, as set forth in Act 101, The Municipal Waste Planning, Recycling, and Waste Reduction Act, "is more effective than forced deposits.

"Forced deposit systems and comprehensive recycling are not compatible," Kolb told the committee. "Why? Because beverage containers are an integral part of the curbside recycling programs. Soft drink containers tend to have a high scrap value. The revenue generated from this high value helps to offset the cost of collection and recycling of materials that are not quite as valuable."

Kolb, citing a study out of Falls Church, Va., noted that beverage containers represent less than 20 percent of all recyclables collected at a typical recycling program, but generate more than 70 percent of the curbside program's revenue.

"By requiring consumers to comply with another system for the recycling of their containers,

revenue will be lost, which will result in a more costly curbside program."

Kolb told the committee that a "forced deposit system would have a detrimental impact on both the commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the soft drink industry" in the state. He noted that loss in sales tax revenue was "immediately apparent" in other states that enacted forced deposit systems.

In a Can Manufacturers Institute study, in 1984, the year after the last bottle bill law was enacted, "the nine deposit states lost an estimated \$28 million in revenue derived from the excise taxes as a result of decreased sales under the deposit laws. The federal government lost \$41 million."

He said New York lost \$9.2 million in tax revenue the first year the state's deposit law went into effect

and beverage sales for the state decreased 5.6 percent.

With the passage of the bill, cost of soft drinks could rise by more than \$1 per case, Kolb noted. The result: possible job losses.

Kolb pointed to a 1984 study by the Can Manufacturers Institute that indicated in Connecticut, 556 employees lost their jobs in the first year of the law's enactment.

Also testifying before the committee was Rick Bloomingdale, secretary-treasurer of the AFL-CIO, representing a coalition of labor, businesses, and organizations who oppose the concept of forced deposit legislation. The coalition includes various unions and the state soft drink association, brewing companies, distributors, and others. The coalition represents approximately 50,000 Pennsylvania workers involved in the

packaging, production, and transportation and sales of beverages, noted Bloomingdale.

In the soft drink association's position paper, the association insists that "major job losses in the can and glass industries can be traced directly to forced deposit laws in other states. For example, Connecticut lost 556 jobs and Michigan lost 800 skilled jobs in the first full year from the enactment of forced deposit laws."

George Moyer disagrees with that argument. Moyer, a dairy farmer in Myerstown, a staunch proponent of the bill, said many jobs were lost simply to factory automation.

"Job loss is not going to happen," said Spendelov of Oregon's Department of Environmental Quality. Actually, jobs will be created at reclamation sites, at the

THE UNDERSIGNED REGISTERED PENNSYLVANIA VOTERS
RETURNABLE BEVERAGE CONTAINER LAW, WHICH WOULD PLACE A
DEPOSIT ON BOTTLES AND CANS, IN ORDER TO HELP KEEP OUR
STREETS AND RURAL ROADS CLEAN.

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PLEASE MAIL THIS PETITION FOR TABULATION TO THE PENNSYLVANIA
BUREAU, GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS DIVISION, 510 S. 31ST STREET
8736, CAMP HILL, PA 17001-8736.