*Iowa’s revolutionary bottle bill legislation does not cost taxpayers one cent: the cost is borne by those who profit –distributors and retailers (grocers).* I am writing to urge you to continue, update and expand Iowa’s bottle bill to contain measures that benefit Iowa consumers and our environment.

        Lawmakers should expand the redemption to include more bottles and cans that use the very same containers (i.e., bottled water, tea and energy drinks) as current beverages covered by the existing law.

        Lawmakers should increase the deposit fee. Increasing the deposit fee will increase redemption.

        Lawmakers should increase the handling fees. A sufficient increase in the handling fee will make it economically viable to encourage retailers to continue redemption and perhaps attractive for those who aren’t redeeming to opt-in instead of pushing the Legislature to opt-out or repeal this popular legislation. An increase may encourage entrepreneurs to launch a new redemption business.

        Lawmakers should shift the responsibilities for administration of the container deposit lawfrom the Department of Natural Resourcesto the Department of Revenue. This approach would be fiscally responsible, accountable and traceable. The Department of Revenue is ideally suited to create procedures to track unclaimed deposits and follow the money, which is at the heart of this issue.

o   Lawmakers should also create a process for groups to apply for unclaimed funds to either a) expand, remodel or locate redemption centers and b) for environmental purposes (this measure may encourage more Iowans to redeem containers).

        Lawmakers should increase and stringently-enforce fines and penalties assessed to violators and determine what agency will ensure adherence to the law.

        Lawmakers should add a trigger to initiate an automatic increase in fees at an appropriate point to provide a timely revenue-generating mechanism.

Redemption allows containers to reach their maximum usage of multiple uses. Recycling, while good, is too often contaminated which limits a container’s life to a single-use before it’s landfilled. It’s also important to remember that recycling is a cost to municipalities, which is passed on to taxpayers. Often apartment dwellers do not have access to recycling and not all Iowa communities offer their residents recycling programs.The current bottle bill is net-neutral for taxpayers.

Grocers/retailers have used the argument that redemption is too unsanitary to be located within their stores. However, it doesn’t have to be. Redemption centers should ideally be located on a building's most outer walls to be convenient to customers and away from the internal operations of the grocery. In many ways, grocers have flaunted their ability to circumvent the law. Distributors aren’t living up their part of the bargain either – they aren’t collecting redeemed containers promptly to avoid storage issues for retailers.

Redeeming where beverages are purchased is the best approach for consumers – it’s convenient and saves time and another trip. Asking consumers to drive 10 miles to redeem a deposit may mean the inconvenience isn’t worth redeeming given the cost of fuel, wear and tear on roadways and time involved. To be successful, we must make it easy and convenient for customers.

There are too many questions with Droppett systems to endorse this method (see attached Droppett fact sheet).

Today, the argument in Iowa is who will profit. It’s always about the money – and there’s a lot of it involved, which is why there is so much at stake. The grocers want unclaimed deposits from the distributors. Iowa lawmakers should take the money out of the equation and benefit the state’s environment that sorely needs help. If legislators take this approach – taxpayers, voters and consumers will win and the environment will win. Distributors and retailers still win from the profits they make from the sale of the beverages.

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