



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Dupont Circle Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2B

October 14, 2024

Committee of the Whole
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 504
Washington, DC 20004
pmendelson@dccouncil.gov

RE: DC Council introduce and pass legislation establishing a Return-Refund-Recycle (“3R”) program

Dear Chairman Mendelson, Councilmember Pinto, Councilmember Allen, Councilmember Henderson, Councilmember Bonds, Councilmember White, and Councilmember McDuffie,
At its regular meeting on October 9, 2024, the Dupont Circle Advisory Neighborhood Commission (“ANC 2B” or “Commission”) considered the above-referenced matter. With 8 of 8 Commissioners in attendance, a quorum at a duly-noticed public meeting, the Commission approved the following resolution by a vote of (8-0-0):

WHEREAS, more than 617 million covered beverage containers are sold in the District of Columbia each year, but less than one quarter, or 152 million, of these containers, are recycled. *Almost 464.5 million beverage containers sold annually in the District are not recycled.*

WHEREAS, of the more than 617 million beverage containers sold in the District, approximately 345 million (over 55 percent) are plastic bottles; more than 180 million (nearly 30 percent) are aluminum cans, and nearly 92 million (almost 15%) are glass bottles.

WHEREAS, more than 255 million of the covered bottles and cans sold annually in the District are for water.

WHEREAS, of the 464.5 million containers that are not recycled, most are disposed of in public trash receptacles because there is no large-scale, convenient, public space recycling program.

WHEREAS, most on-street trash receptacles provided by the District, National Park Service, and other entities, are of limited capacity, do not support recyclable items, are not emptied frequently enough, resulting in unsightly overflow onto sidewalks, roadways, grassy areas. Many containers along with other trash wind up being carried into antiquated storm drains that discharge into waterways.

WHEREAS, plastic bottles collected in trash pickups and community-led cleanups are often too contaminated to be recycled. They wind up in landfills or are incinerated, which contributes to air pollution and climate change.

WHEREAS, beverage container litter and dumping is found in all neighborhoods in the District, it disproportionately affects residents of Wards 5, 7 and 8, all of which border the Anacostia River.

WHEREAS, a proven solution to beverage container litter is a Beverage Container Deposit Return (“Bottle Bill”) law. Bottle Bills reduce trash and boost recycling rates because of the deposit return incentive.

WHEREAS, deposit return was created over a century ago by bottle, can, and beverage, manufacturers in order to reduce their costs by repeatedly reusing already manufactured bottles and steel cans. For decades there were no specific laws compelling participation; however, the economic conditions of the Great Depression followed by wartime rationing provided a natural incentive for consumers to return their empties for the deposit refund.

WHEREAS, the arrival of plastic bottles and lightweight aluminum cans for beverages in the post-WWII years, heavily promoting and seducing consumers with their wasteful “no deposit, no return, just toss it when empty” philosophy, resulted in unsustainable levels of resource consumption, litter, waste, and pollution.

WHEREAS, by the 1970s it became apparent to environmental groups and governments that the tsunami of litter and pollution had to be reduced. Whereas earlier in the century it was the manufacturers leading the charge and consumer participation could be obtained with patriotic appeals, manufacturers opposed returning to the previous way of doing things (and still do), bottle deposit return laws began to appear out of necessity.

WHEREAS, the 10 states currently having Bottle Bill laws, including California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York and Oregon, account for 27% of the US population, yet account for over 50% of all bottles recycled in the United States.

WHEREAS, realizing significant reduction of beverage bottle and can litter in the District requires a consistent, convenient, ubiquitous recycling option. An effective, equitable Bottle Deposit Return law can help accomplish this.

WHEREAS, with a Bottle Bill consumers would pay 10 cents per qualified beverage container at the time of purchase. The fee would be refunded in full when the empties are returned to participating merchants, kiosks, or other redemption points. The form of repayment should be selectable by the consumer.

WHEREAS, a Bottle Bill must ensure that coverage and siting of redemption points is uniform and convenient, especially for residents in communities historically underserved by supermarkets and other food retailers.

WHEREAS, a Bottle Bill must have adequate safeguards, administrative controls, and oversight, to detect and prevent abuse, fraud, or new or novel types of crimes.

WHEREAS, the District’s 5 cent bag fee was heavily opposed when proposed. Dire predictions of consumers refusing to switch to reusable bags, businesses being ruined and the District

blacklisted for retail and dining siting. Instead, none of those scenarios materialized. Most important, the fee succeeded at dramatically reducing the number of plastic bags polluting our streets and waterways.

WHEREAS, not all refunds will be collected for various reasons. The law must specify that unclaimed refunds shall only be moved into a dedicated, restricted account that supports environmental programs for the benefit communities and the District. Uncollected refund shall not be placed into the General Fund.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that ANC 2B requests that the Council of the District of Columbia initiate the legislative process to establish a meaningful, equitable, and durable, Beverage Container Deposit-Return (Bottle Bill) Law.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that ANC 2B requests there be multiple opportunities for public discussion and input from stakeholders citywide to ensure the legislation identifies and addresses concerns and will provide the intended outcome.

Commissioners Jeffrey Rueckgauer (2B02@anc.dc.gov) and Meg Roggensack (2B01@anc.dc.gov) are the Commission's representatives in this matter.

ON BEHALF OF THE COMMISSION.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Meg Roggensack". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Meg Roggensack
Chair