

## **Testimony on H.173 - Beverage Containers - before House Natural Resources, Fish & Wildlife**

by Rep. Mike Yantachka 2/23/2017

Your committee has before you two bills dealing with beverage containers, H.67 and H.173. H.67 would extend the current deposit system to water bottles and other containers. H.173 takes a different tack on beverage container recycling based on Act 148 which mandates recycling throughout Vermont. My bill, which I proposed primarily for discussion purposes to re-examine the strategy, would eliminate the deposit system on all beverage containers and place a 5 cent non-refundable fee on all glass beverage containers.

My reasoning is fourfold.

1. Aluminum and plastic are two of the most valuable materials for recycling and the deposit system diverts them from our solid waste stream, thereby eliminating a significant revenue source for our solid waste districts.
2. Glass recycling imposes a loss on our solid waste districts because the value of the glass is lower than the cost of collecting and processing it.
3. While consumers pay a nickel at purchase, which is paid to the beverage distributors, and receive a nickel back at redemption, beverage distributors pay the redemption center 8 cents per container. This additional cost as well as the cost to handle and transport the containers is built into the price of the beverage. However, the number of unredeemed containers is substantial enough that almost \$2M per year is left with the beverage distributors. This complex handling system would be simplified by my bill.
4. The 5 cent fee on glass containers would be remitted directly from the retailer to the state's Solid Waste Assistance Fund to aid our overall recycling efforts by funding certain programs of the solid waste districts. This would also eliminate the middleman from the recycling stream.

I expect the Natural Resources, Fish & Wildlife Committee to consider the merits of both bills with testimony from solid waste districts, the beverage industry, environmental organizations such as VPIRG, and groups that rely on the deposit system for fundraising. Your decision will, I hope, be based on data and public input. I realize this is a big change to a long-standing and successful program that has served Vermont well. With changing times, the greater acceptance of recycling, and the positive effects of Act 148, I think it is worth revisiting the strategy for recycling beverage containers.