



**To: Chairman Chris Bray and Members of the Senate Natural Resources and Energy Committee**  
**Fr: Paul Burns, VPIRG**  
**Dt: April 25, 2022**  
**Re: H.175 – Modernizing the Bottle Bill**

I am grateful for the opportunity to have participated in the working group established by your committee to try to find common ground among diverse stakeholders with an interest in Vermont's longstanding Bottle Bill program.

Though the group was initially to have included a representative of Reloop, a consulting firm who testified in favor of modernizing the Bottle Bill before your committee, that person was unable to participate, and no replacement was named. Therefore, I did my best to consult with and represent the interests of many of those who favor the adoption of modernizing legislation. And of course, other stakeholders were given an opportunity to speak at the end of our meetings.

I think it's important to recognize the tremendous progress that was made by the group as a whole, led by Matt Chapman at DEC. Participants acted in good faith, shared their ideas and concerns, and generally demonstrated a willingness to find compromise in order to reach an agreement.

**The fact that VPIRG and the Beverage Association of Vermont have come to a place of agreement on nearly every aspect of the revised legislation now before you is remarkable.** It's my strong hope that you will reward this good faith effort at finding compromise with your support for the revised version of H.175.

We offer one small proposal of amendment that we believe is reflective of some of the discussion we had as a working group:

**§ 1532 Stewardship Plan: Minimum Requirements**

Page 8, Subsection (a)(1)(B)

We urge you to require at least one redemption center "per municipality with a population of **7,000** or more" residents.

The current draft puts the requirement at 8,000 residents, which could put Montpelier in jeopardy of not qualifying. (The 2020 Census put Montpelier's population at 8,074.) The working group talked specifically about the fact that Montpelier lacks a redemption center today and how there was general support for this provision covering Montpelier and similarly sized communities.

Regarding the proposal by Clare Buckley of the Vermont Wholesale Beverage Association to significantly weaken the draft provided by Matt Chapman of DEC, VPIRG and other members of Vermont's environmental community are strongly opposed.

**Vermont Public Interest Research Group**

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Quite honestly, VPIRG's agreement to sign off on a draft that did not include glass wine bottles immediately in the program was a huge concession. Indeed, the evidence supporting the inclusion of glass wine bottles in the program is as strong or stronger than any other aspect of modernization. But in the spirit of compromise, we agree with the idea that the question of whether and when to bring wine bottle into the Bottle Bill system could be studied as part of this legislation.

We are confident the analysis will support our belief that wine bottles are best handled by the Bottle Bill program. This is the position of glass recyclers from whom you've taken testimony, environmental organizations, and many redemption centers. The case for glass bottles going to the Bottle Bill program has even been in the past made by Casella and CSWD.

Consider these quotes from CSWD and Casella on the benefits of sending glass to Bottle Bill programs:

**From VTDigger (May 29, 2019), quoting Michele Morris, outreach and communications director for CSWD, who explained why glass should go to the Bottle Bill program instead of MRFs:**

**Morris suggested the bottle bill could be expanded to cover wine bottles and other types of glass jars.**

*"That's a better stream for glass," she said. "Let's get it where it has the best likelihood of having its value retained and being made back into new glass."*

<https://vtdigger.org/2019/05/29/glass-dumping-violation-points-poor-glass-recycling-market/>

**From a Casella blog (March 8, 2019) where the company explained why it favored adding glass to NY's Bottle Bill program, though it opposed other expansion:**

**We Support a Bottle Bill on Glass**

We support expanding the Bottle Bill to additional glass containers. There are only limited and low-value markets for recycled glass. Extracting glass from mixed residential recyclables is costly and further adds to the glass marketing challenge. Placing a deposit on wine, liquor, and other glass bottles will divert more glass from the municipal recycling stream into the deposit system, reducing municipal recycling costs and improving the marketability of the glass.

Extending the bottle bill to wine and liquor will divert more glass, over 150,000 tons, from the municipal recycling stream and into the deposit system thereby reducing municipal recycling costs.

**Currently, less than 20% of glass that enters MRFs in New York is made into a new product.**

Glass that is redeemed through the bottle bill system is much more likely to end up in a higher end use than glass produced at Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs). This is because it is kept separate from other materials, whereas glass produced by MRFs is contaminated with shredded paper, bottle caps, straws,

corks, and other small items. Many MRFs lack the equipment to “clean up” their glass for marketing purposes, particularly smaller MRFs that cannot justify the costs of cleaning equipment due to the low (negative) value of processed glass.

<https://www.casella.com/blog/expanded-bottle-bill#:~:text=We%20Support%20a%20Bottle%20Bill%20on%20Glass&text=Placing%20a%20deposit%20on%20wine,the%20marketability%20of%20the%20glass.>

Again, VPIRG has agreed not to include glass wine bottles immediately as a compromise. **But wine packaged in other non-glass containers should absolutely be covered.**

And there was strong support from VPIRG, the Beverage Association of Vermont, TOMRA, and others for including hard cider in the program right away – as soon as it is expanded to include other containers. **Hard cider is primarily packaged in aluminum containers, and it is confusing and unnecessary for it to be treated differently from beer packaged in the same containers.**

**Study:** It is **unnecessary to study wine bottles in an EPR program separate from the Bottle Bill** (which is itself a form of extended producer responsibility). Studies like this have already been done, and we have years of evidence to show that glass packaging being handled outside of the Bottle Bill program is inferior.

**Unclaimed deposits:** VPIRG supports the compromise reached in the working group and opposes the Wholesale Beverage Association’s proposal to give the unclaimed deposits to the PRO indefinitely.

**Trigger for the deposit increase:** This provision was **absolutely vital to the compromise VPIRG agreed to**. We must have confidence that there is some means of ensuring the ongoing success of the program. This draft ensures that if redemption rates do not rise over time, then the deposit will increase from five cents to ten cents. We and others believe that that increase should come immediately, but again, in the spirit of compromise, we agreed to the trigger language included here. We strongly oppose the Wholesale Beverage Association’s plan to remove this provision.

Thank you for your consideration and for the time you’ve devoted to this important bill. We urge you to pass it quickly to allow some possibility for other committees and the full Senate to consider and pass it this year.