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Celebrate Earth Day

Boost Michigan Recycling

Recycle the Bottle Bill!

On Earth Day, MIRA members call on the legislature to take Michigan's recycling system out of the 1970s and replace it with a modern system

LANSING, Mich. — The [Midwest Independent Retailers Association \(MIRA\)](#) is celebrating Earth Day by calling on state leaders to eliminate Michigan's 50-year old Bottle Bill and instead invest in universal, curbside recycling programs to boost Michigan's overall recycling rates.

MIRA recognizes the Bottle Bill was a crucial program when implemented in the mid-1970s, helping get trash off our roadsides and incentivizing Michiganders to recycle at a record pace. But the Bottle Bill is now outdated, falling out of favor with consumers, and holding back Michigan's overall recycling efforts.

Recycling the Bottle Bill will allow the state to focus efforts and resources on universal curbside recycling programs and raise recycling rates statewide.

"When it was implemented 50 years ago, the Bottle Bill was effective at lowering the amount of roadside litter," **said Bill Wild, president and CEO of MIRA.** "But public attitudes about protecting our environment and recycling have improved. Michiganders want to recycle, but they want it to be as easy, streamlined, inexpensive, and safe as possible. Ending the bottle deposit program and replacing it with improved curbside recycling programs will increase recycling rates, save money for consumers, and get dirty bottles and cans out of our food stores."

"It is time to Recycle the Bottle Bill," Wild concluded.

There are many reasons for moving the recycling of returnables into the modern era:

Remove filthy containers from food stores and instead boost curbside recycling: Protecting public health has remained a top issue since the pandemic, so why would the state continue mandating that dirty – even hazardous – containers be brought inside retail food stores? Repeal the Bottle Bill to protect public health and redirect these valuable recyclables to the curbside recycling system.

Cut costs and inconvenience for families: Gov. Whitmer and legislators can cut costs for Michigan families by eliminating required bottle deposits (and the extra work required to get their money back), while also slashing more than \$100 million per year in program costs that pressure food prices.

Participation is collapsing, but family funds kept by government: Consumer frustration with the process has resulted in a participation drop of around 30% from the law's peak. Worse yet, unclaimed family grocery money is not returned to consumers but instead devoured by program costs, anti-fraud efforts and the vast majority that is being spent on programs unrelated to recycling.

According to the Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy, Michigan has been improving overall recycling for several years in a row. But at the same time, the state's returnable rate under the bottle bill has dropped dramatically, from well above 90% down to 70.4%.

The reduction in returning cans and bottles to retailers was exacerbated during the pandemic and shows no sign of recovering. Michiganders are showing that the effort, time, and health risks of storing and then returning cans and bottles is just not worth it anymore.

By replacing the bottle bill system with more universal recycling, Michigan would eliminate the need for Michiganders to haul their empties to their local grocery or convenience store and instead allow them to toss these materials in their curbside bins, as they would with paper and plastic.

Notably, Michigan's decades old bottle bill is an outlier nationally, with only 11 other states having a bottle deposit law on the books.

In the spirit of Earth Day, legislators now have a chance to revolutionize Michigan's recycling program by Recycling the Bottle Bill and moving our state into the modern era.

About the Midwest Independent Retailers Association

The Midwest Independent Retailers Association is the premier trade association representing independent retailers and their suppliers across the Midwest. Known as "The voice for ALL independent retailers," MIRA supports its members through seven pillars of service: business resources, government relations, vendor programs, compliance, networking, community outreach, and its charitable arm, the Midwest Independent Retailers Foundation.

MIRA is headquartered in West Bloomfield, Michigan, with additional offices in Lansing, Michigan, and Columbus, Ohio.

To learn more about the organization, its members, and MIRA's public policy advocacy positions, please visit the MIRA's website at midwestretailers.org.

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