

Ms. Lena Hoffman
144 Shady Oaks Drive
Dale, Texas 78616

Dear Ms. Hoffman:

Thank you for your letter of March 20, 2000 to President Clinton regarding your support for a national deposit-refund law for beverage containers. Thank you also for enclosing signatures supporting a bottle bill. We here in the Office of Solid Waste share your interest in reducing litter and increasing recycling of beverage containers as well as other types of waste, whether they are littered or disposed.

Almost every year, one or more Members of Congress introduces a bill to require a national deposit-refund system for beverage containers. To date, as far as we know, Congress has not passed any legislation on this topic. The management of municipal solid waste (MSW) has historically come under the purview of state and local authorities since the types and extent of waste management concerns differ from region to region. EPA currently does not have statutory authority, under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), to establish regulations for recycling or source reduction or to mandate a national deposit-refund system for beverage containers.

However, EPA strongly supports waste prevention and recycling of MSW. One project we are currently supporting is the Plastic Redesign Project, the purpose of which is to work with designers and sellers of beverages in plastic bottles to encourage design features that will not impede recycling of these bottles. For more information on this project, please see our web site at www.epa.gov/epr and look in the section on Packaging for links to the Plastic Redesign Project. In addition, several years ago, we undertook a study of bottle bills and their costs and benefits. This study was never finalized, however please find enclosed a copy for your information.

In 1989, EPA set a goal for the nation to reduce and recycle 25% of MSW. The U.S. has surpassed this goal and EPA has set a new national goal to recycle 35% of MSW by 2005. To meet this new target, we are relying on the private sector, as well as Federal, state and local government, to develop policies and programs to stimulate and implement recycling programs. Since 1989, the number of curbside recycling programs has grown from 1,000 to over 8,000 and the national recycling rate is now around 28%.

This is in large part due to the fact that many

state and local governments have adopted vigorous recycling requirements as part of an overall integrated solid waste management strategy.

Thank you for sharing your views on the benefits of bottle bills. We appreciate your interest in increasing recycling and making our country a cleaner and more attractive place to live.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth A. Cotsworth, Director
Office of Solid Waste

Enclosure

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