

California's Bottle Bill

Enacted in 1987, California's Bottle Bill has been one of the most successful and cost-effective recycling and litter-reduction programs in the United States, targeting aluminum, glass, plastic, and bimetal containers.

The program works through a deposit/refund mechanism. At checkout, consumers pay a California Redemption Value (CRV) deposit of 5 cents for containers under 24 ounces, and 10 cents for containers over 24 ounces. That money is either returned to consumers when they recycle their containers at a redemption center, or it goes to a hauler or non-profit recycler when disposed via curbside recycling.

But financial support for California's recycling infrastructure has been reduced to an unsustainable level due to falling scrap values and an outdated state subsidy formula that results in severe underpayments to redemption centers. From 2013 through mid-2019, more than 1,300 (53%) of the state's redemption centers closed, resulting in less recovered income for consumers, many of whom are low income. These closures also have resulted in fewer recycling industry jobs and lower recycling rates.

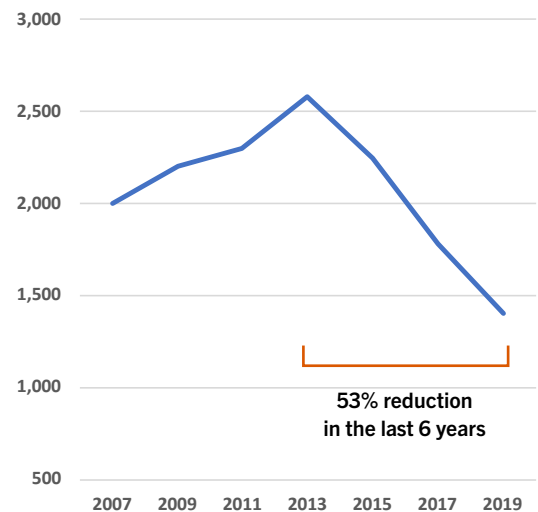
Next Steps

A considerable effort is needed to revive this program. Possible fixes identified by stakeholders and the recycling community include:

- Updating the formula used to calculate reimbursement payments.
- Ensuring every community has access to convenient recycling locations.
- Increasing the deposit from 5 to 10 cents for all containers to incentivize higher return rates.
- Increasing enforcement and financial penalties for beverage container retailers that do not meet their legal obligation to buy back CRV containers.



**Number of Redemption Centers in California
2007-2019**



(source: CalRecycle)