

NEWS RELEASE

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Prop.1 Would Increase Cost of City's 'Blue Bag' Curbside Recycling

Collecting Glass and Plastic Bottles Lead to Higher Net Costs

Columbia, MO. (March 21, 2002) – Taxpayers can expect to see higher costs for operating Columbia's Blue Bag curbside recycling program, if Prop. 1 is approved by the voters on April 2nd, according to an analysis released today by the Container Recycling Institute.

“Supporters of Proposition 1 are using ‘fuzzy math’ in arguing for repeal of the deposit ordinance. The claim of repeal supporters in paid advertising is that the Blue Bag program would potentially generate an additional \$200,000 in revenue annually. But Prop. 1 supporters fail to disclose to voters that higher costs for collecting plastic and glass bottles would wipe out any benefit from aluminum can collection,” Pat Franklin, executive director of the Container Recycling Institute said.

In a letter to Mayor Darwin Hindman and city council members, the Container Recycling Institute summarizes findings from its analysis of city recycling data and program costs provided by the Department of Public Works.

“Bottom line, the Blue Bag recycling program would lose an additional \$96,000 to \$114,000 in the coming year. Losses would increase over time, as beverage companies switch to using more plastic bottles and fewer aluminum cans,” David Markert, CRI Research Associate said.

“In addition, the city would pay higher litter clean-up costs and more for recycling education. These costs would likely be substantial,” Markert said.

The Container Recycling Institute is a national, nonprofit research and education organization based in Arlington, Virginia, that serves as a clearinghouse for information on beverage container recycling systems.

“We want voters to make an informed decision about Prop. 1, which is why CRI placed a full-page advertisement in the Columbia Daily Tribune today about the real impact of repealing the 5-cent deposit on bottles and cans,” CRI Senior Policy Analyst Lance King said.

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The CRI advertisement charges that the “Yes on Recycling, Yes on Prop. 1 Committee” is using fuzzy math, because they only talk about income and not expenses.

“Most curbside recycling programs across the nation are struggling with rising costs of collecting plastic and glass bottles. These bottles cost more to collect than the city receives by selling them in scrap markets,” King said.

“Columbia’s blue bag program isn’t the most effective type of curbside program, because all the cans and bottles are thrown into together, causing high levels of contamination that lower the value of the material. Just think about it for a minute, broken glass gets mixed with plastic and metal with the result that the glass is virtually worthless. Different types of plastic bottles also get mixed together, reducing their value,” Franklin said.

Columbia would be better off keeping the deposit system, which costs taxpayers virtually nothing, and targeting the curbside program to collect newspapers and other kinds of bottles, cans and jars, CRI concludes.

“Repeal of the deposit ordinance would actually cost taxpayers more every year, while the actual number of bottles and cans would decline and container litter would increase. Why pay more and collect less?” King asked.

For the complete analysis contact the Container Recycling Institute at (703) 276-9800. CRI will also be pleased to provide a copy of the letter sent to Mayor Darwin Hindman and the Columbia Department of Public Works.

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