



**SIERRA
CLUB**
FOUNDED 1892



EMBARGOED RELEASE

For release on November 14, 2003

Contacts: Pat Franklin 703/276-9800

Lance King 703/536-7282

Environmental, Recycling Leaders Support Senator Jeffords' Legislation to Double Bottle and Can Recycling

Nation's largest glass recycling company backs proposal

WASHINGTON (November 14, 2003) – Three dozen environmental groups, recycling organizations and businesses announced support today for legislation sponsored by Senator James Jeffords (I-VT) aimed at doubling the national beverage container recycling rate.

Sen. Jeffords' bill, the "National Beverage Container Producer Responsibility Act of 2003," would hold beverage companies responsible for developing a system to achieve an 80 percent recycling rate for their containers. A 10-cent refundable deposit would apply to an estimated 180 billion aluminum cans, plastic and glass bottles used as packaging for most kinds of beverages, excluding dairy products.

"I am introducing this bill on the eve of America Recycles Day to create accessible bottle and can recycling options for all Americans," Senator Jeffords said.

"The ten states with bottle bills are recycling more bottles and cans than the other 40 states combined. My bill would leverage the market incentives created by a refundable deposit to encourage beverage container recycling. One innovation in the legislation is that industry would have the flexibility to devise the most cost-effective means to meet the goal."

"My bill will double the national beverage container recycling rate, save energy, reduce pollution, prevent road side litter and create sustainable jobs," Jeffords said. Original co-sponsors of the bill include Senators John F. Kerry (D-MA), Patrick J. Leahy (D-VT) and Joseph I. Lieberman (D-CT). All four senators represent states with deposit laws, popularly known as "bottle bills".

"Recycling is the most popular way that individuals express support for environmental protection," said Dr. Allen Hershkowitz, senior researcher with the Natural Resources Defense Council. "Unfortunately, we are seeing a decline in recycling of many materials--except in states with financial incentives like the refundable deposit on beverage containers."

Pat Franklin, executive director of the Container Recycling Institute, said: "Deposit laws are the most effective public or private recycling policy adopted in the past 30 years. The ten states that currently require refundable deposits recycle 490 containers per person per year, compared to only 190 per person in non-deposit states."

- More -

printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper, process chlorine free

Fifteen national environmental and recycling organizations, and a major glass recycling business, publicly endorsed the bill today. Endorsements came from American Littoral Society, Container Recycling Institute, Center for a New American Dream, Co-op America, Friends of the Earth, GrassRoots Recycling Network, Greenpeace USA, International Rivers Network, Mineral Policy Center, Natural Resources Defense Council, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Scenic America, Sierra Club, Strategic Materials, US Public Interest Research Group.

Tex Corley, president of Strategic Materials, said: "Creating a strong financial incentive for recycling is good for business. Glass and other materials collected through deposit systems, unlike those collected through curbside recycling programs, are of a higher quality, and thus more marketable. That's why I support the legislation sponsored by Senator Jeffords." Strategic Materials, based in Houston, Texas, is the nation's largest company processing glass for use primarily by the glass container and fiberglass manufacturing industries.

Of the ten states that have implemented deposit laws, Michigan is the only one with a 10-cent deposit. That state also has the highest beverage container recycling rate of any state--95 percent. The forty states without deposit laws recycle those containers at an average rate of approximately 30 percent, according to the Container Recycling Institute.

"The greatest environmental benefits flowing from a national deposit system would be the energy savings from using more recycling materials and reduction of air and water pollution," said Jim Mays, the national Sierra Club's Waste Committee Chair.

The Container Recycling Institute estimates that the total energy savings achieved by a national bottle bill would be 53 million barrels of crude oil equivalent (bcoe) annually, or enough to meet the annual residential energy needs of more than 3 million American households a year.

"More than 100 million Americans recycle every day at home or work. America Recycles Day on November 15 is a positive celebration. But the nation's leading beverage companies, like Coke and Pepsi, keep churning out billions of single-serving, throwaway containers that don't get recycled. These companies have spent hundreds of millions of dollars fighting deposit systems, but haven't come up with realistic alternatives to achieve comparable results," Franklin said.

Currently, municipal and state governments absorb the fiscal burden of recycling or disposing of containers. The Jeffords bill would transfer this cost to the producers and consumers of the beverages. "By holding producers and consumers responsible for the 180 billion bottles and cans purchased each year, we can increase recycling at no cost to taxpayers," David Wood, executive director of the GrassRoots Recycling Network said.

A fact sheet on the bill and additional information can be obtained by calling the contacts listed above or by going to the Internet at: www.bottlebill.org. The complete list of national and statewide supporting organizations and businesses is attached.

States with container deposit laws include: California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, Oregon and Vermont. Hawaii adopted a new bottle bill last year that goes into effect in 2005.

###