

Oregon Bottle Bill Background Information Fact Sheet (Attachment C)

Richard Chambers, a logging equipment salesman, picked up litter during his hiking, climbing and kayaking trips around Oregon. In 1968, Mr. Chambers called his State Representative, Paul Hanneman. Mr. Chambers told Representative Hanneman that he had seen a newspaper article from British Columbia, Canada, wanting to ban (get rid of) non-refundable bottles and cans. Mr. Chambers wanted to add a deposit on bottles and cans to encourage people to return them to the store for a refund of their deposit.

Mr. Chambers started a letter writing campaign using colorful stationary to attract the attention of the people he was writing to. He also had people sign a petition to show support for the bill. When they had enough support, House Bill 1157 was written. Representative Hanneman sponsored the bill and a committee heard testimony.

Mr. Chambers brought people to the hearing to testify in support of the bill, including a river guide who testified about bottle and cans littering the water. He also brought a farmer who had lost four cows because the cows had ingested (eaten) glass and metal pieces from bottles and cans thrown into his pastures.

The beverage companies opposed the bill, saying that it would cost bottle companies too much money. Mr. Chambers suggested that a five-cent deposit be charged on each container. He said this would help with the price beverage companies would have to pay. The beverage companies still would not support the bill. However the committee voted, passed the bill, and sent it to the House floor for debate and a vote. The bill failed in the House.

Mr. Chambers would not be stopped. He kept up his letter writing with the help of another Oregon resident, Don Waggoner. More petitions were signed and a new bill was written. Once again Representative Hanneman sponsored the bill. A new committee heard testimony in support and in opposition to the bill. Opposition to the bill came from the grocery store owners who felt that the cost of processing the bottles and cans would be too expensive.

One store owner who supported the bill was John Piacentini, owner of Plaid Pantry. He challenged people to return soda and bottles to his stores. He said he would give a half cent for every bottle or can they brought in. Within two weeks, people brought 150,000 cans and bottles to his stores. There were so many bottles and cans that Governor McCall had to have the National Guard help remove them.

In 1971, House Bill 1036 passed and was signed by Governor Tom McCall.

(Author, Judith Lowery based on the information gathered from: Beverage Container Act. Author, Mark Henkels. Oregon Encyclopeida.org.)