

STATE OF NEW YORK

237

2023-2024 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

(Prefiled)

January 4, 2023

Introduced by Sen. MAY -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Environmental Conservation

AN ACT to amend the environmental conservation law, in relation to returnable bottles

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. Subdivision 1 of section 27-1003 of the environmental
2 conservation law, as amended by section 2 of part SS of chapter 59 of
3 the laws of 2009, is amended to read as follows:

4 1. "Beverage" means carbonated soft drinks, water, beer, other malt
5 beverages [~~and a~~], wine, liquor, distilled spirit coolers, and cider and
6 wine [~~product~~] products as defined in [~~subdivision thirty-six-a of~~]
7 section three of the alcoholic beverage control law. "Malt beverages"
8 means any beverage obtained by the alcoholic fermentation or infusion or
9 decoction of barley, malt, hops, or other wholesome grain or cereal and
10 water including, but not limited to ale, stout or malt liquor. "Water"
11 means any beverage identified through the use of letters, words or
12 symbols on its product label as a type of water, including any flavored
13 water or nutritionally enhanced water[~~, provided, however, that "water"~~
14 ~~does not include any beverage identified as a type of water to which a~~
15 ~~sugar has been added~~].

16 § 2. Subdivision 1 of section 27-1003 of the environmental conserva-
17 tion law, as amended by section one of this act, is amended to read as
18 follows:

19 1. "Beverage" means carbonated soft drinks, noncarbonated soft drinks,
20 noncarbonated fruit or vegetable juices containing less than one hundred
21 percent fruit or vegetable juice, coffee and tea beverages, carbonated
22 fruit beverages, water, beer, other malt beverages, wine, liquor,
23 distilled spirit coolers, and cider and wine products as defined in
24 section three of the alcoholic beverage control law. "Malt beverages"

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 means any beverage obtained by the alcoholic fermentation or infusion or
2 decoction of barley, malt, hops, or other wholesome grain or cereal and
3 water including, but not limited to ale, stout or malt liquor. "Water"
4 means any beverage identified through the use of letters, words or
5 symbols on its product label as a type of water, including any flavored
6 water or nutritionally enhanced water.

7 § 3. Subdivision 12 of section 27-1003 of the environmental conserva-
8 tion law, as added by section 3 of part SS of chapter 59 of the laws of
9 2009, is amended and a new subdivision 14 is added to read as follows:

10 12. "Reverse vending machine" means an automated device that uses a
11 laser scanner, microprocessor, or other technology to accurately recog-
12 nize the universal product code (UPC) on containers to determine if the
13 container is redeemable and accumulates information regarding containers
14 redeemed, including the number of such containers redeemed, thereby
15 enabling the reverse vending machine to accept containers from redeemers
16 and to issue a scrip or receipt for their refund value. Such definition
17 shall also apply to alternative technology approved by the commissioner
18 pursuant to subparagraph (iii) of paragraph (b) of subdivision one of
19 section 27-1007 of this title.

20 14. "State-specific UPC code" means a universal product code and label
21 design that is unique to New York or used only in New York and any other
22 states that have a substantially similar refund value law.

23 § 4. Section 27-1007 of the environmental conservation law, as added
24 by section 4 of part SS of chapter 59 of the laws of 2009, paragraph (b)
25 of subdivision 1 as amended by chapter 459 of the laws of 2011, and
26 subdivision 12 as added by section 3 of part F of chapter 58 of the laws
27 of 2013, is amended to read as follows:

28 § 27-1007. Mandatory acceptance.

29 Except as provided in section 27-1009 of this title:

30 1. (a) A dealer shall accept at his or her place of business from a
31 redeemer any empty beverage containers of the design, shape, size,
32 color, composition and brand sold or offered for sale by the dealer, and
33 shall pay to the redeemer the refund value of each such beverage
34 container as established in section 27-1005 of this title. Redemptions
35 of refund value must be in legal tender, or a scrip or receipt from a
36 reverse vending machine, provided that the scrip or receipt can be
37 exchanged for legal tender for a period of not less than sixty days
38 without requiring the purchase of other goods. In the event such scrip
39 or receipt expires, such scrip or receipt must indicate any expiration
40 date and the dealer must post a conspicuous sign indicating how many
41 days a redeemer has to exchange the scrip or receipt for legal tender.
42 If such notification is not provided, a dealer must redeem the full
43 refund value indicated on any legible scrip or receipt. The use or pres-
44 ence of a reverse vending machine shall not relieve a dealer of any
45 obligations imposed pursuant to this section. If a dealer utilizes a
46 reverse vending machine to redeem containers, the dealer shall provide
47 redemption of beverage containers when the reverse vending machine is
48 full, broken, under repair or does not accept a type of beverage
49 container sold or offered for sale by such dealer and may not limit the
50 hours or days of redemption except as provided by subdivision three of
51 this section.

52 (b) Beginning March first, two thousand ten, a dealer whose place of
53 business is part of a chain engaged in the same general field of busi-
54 ness which operates ten or more units in this state under common owner-
55 ship and whose business has at least: (i) forty thousand but less than
56 sixty thousand square feet devoted to the display of merchandise for

1 sale to the public shall install and maintain at least two reverse vend-
2 ing machines at the dealer's place of business; (ii) sixty thousand but
3 less than eighty-five thousand square feet devoted to the display of
4 merchandise for sale to the public shall install and maintain at least
5 three reverse vending machines at the dealer's place of business; or
6 (iii) eighty-five thousand square feet devoted to the display of
7 merchandise for sale to the public shall install and maintain at least
8 four reverse vending machines at the dealer's place of business. The
9 requirements of [~~paragraph (b) of~~] this subdivision to install and main-
10 tain reverse vending machines shall not apply to a dealer that: (i)
11 sells only beverage containers of twenty ounces or less where such
12 beverage containers are packaged in quantities fewer than six; (ii)
13 sells beverage containers and devotes no more than five percent of its
14 floor space to the display and sale of consumer commodities, as defined
15 in section two hundred fourteen-h of the agriculture and markets law; or
16 (iii) obtains a waiver from the commissioner authorizing dealers to
17 provide consumers with an alternative technology that: (A) determines if
18 the container is redeemable, (B) provides protections against fraud
19 through a system that validates each container redeemed by reading the
20 universal product code and, except with respect to refillable contain-
21 ers, renders the container unredeemable, (C) accumulates information
22 regarding containers redeemed, and (D) issues legal tender, or a scrip,
23 receipt, or other form of credit for the refund value, that can be
24 exchanged for legal tender for a period of not less than sixty days
25 without requiring the purchase of other goods and includes any expira-
26 tion date on the scrip, receipt, or other form of credit. Notwithstand-
27 ing the foregoing, if the alternative technology does not allow consum-
28 ers to immediately obtain the refund value of the redeemed container, a
29 dealer shall be permitted to deploy such alternative technology only if
30 it also offers an alternative that allows consumers to conveniently and
31 immediately obtain such refund value through a reverse vending machine
32 or other alternative method.

33 (c) A dealer to which paragraph (b) of this subdivision does not apply
34 and whose place of business is at least forty thousand square feet which
35 does not utilize reverse vending machines to process empty beverage
36 containers for redemption shall: (i) establish and maintain a dedicated
37 area within such business to accept beverage containers for redemption;
38 (ii) adequately staff such area to facilitate efficient acceptance and
39 processing of such containers during business hours; and (iii) post one
40 or more conspicuous signs conforming to the size and color requirements
41 described in subdivision two of this section at each public entrance to
42 the business which describes where in the business the redemption area
43 is located. The commissioner may establish in rules and regulations
44 additional standards for the efficient processing of beverage containers
45 by such dealers.

46 (d) For the purposes of this subdivision on any day that a dealer is
47 open for less than twenty-four hours, the dealer may restrict or refuse
48 the payment of refund values during the first and last hour the dealer
49 is open for business.

50 2. A dealer shall post a conspicuous sign, at the point of sale, that
51 states:

52 "NEW YORK BOTTLE BILL OF RIGHTS

53 STATE LAW REQUIRES US TO REDEEM EMPTY RETURNABLE BEVERAGE CONTAINERS OF
54 THE SAME TYPE AND BRAND THAT WE SELL OR OFFER FOR SALE

1 YOU HAVE CERTAIN RIGHTS UNDER THE NEW YORK STATE RETURNABLE CONTAINER
2 ACT:

3 THE RIGHT to return your empties for refund to any dealer who sells
4 the same brand, type and size, whether you bought the beverage from the
5 dealer or not. It is illegal to return containers for refund that you
6 did not pay a deposit on in New York state.

7 THE RIGHT to get your deposit refund in cash, without proof of
8 purchase.

9 THE RIGHT to return your empties any day, any hour, except for the
10 first and last hour of the dealer's business day (empty containers may
11 be redeemed at any time in 24-hour stores).

12 THE RIGHT to return your containers if they are empty and intact.
13 Washing containers is not required by law, but is strongly recommended
14 to maintain sanitary conditions.

15 The New York state returnable container act can be enforced by the New
16 York state department of environmental conservation, the New York state
17 department of agriculture and markets, the New York state department of
18 taxation and finance, the New York state attorney general and/or by your
19 local government."

20 Such sign must be no less than eight inches by ten inches in size and
21 have lettering a minimum of one quarter inch high, and of a color which
22 contrasts with the background. The department shall maintain a toll free
23 telephone number for a "bottle bill complaint line" that shall be avail-
24 able from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. each business day to receive reports of
25 violations of this title. The telephone number shall be listed on any
26 sign required by this section.

27 3. On or after June first, two thousand nine, a dealer may limit the
28 number of empty beverage containers to be accepted for redemption at the
29 dealer's place of business to no less than seventy-two containers per
30 visit, per redeemer, per day, provided that:

31 (a) The dealer has a written agreement with a redemption center, be it
32 either at a fixed physical location within the same county and within
33 [~~one-half~~] one mile of the dealer's place of business, or a mobile
34 redemption center, operated by a redemption center, that is located
35 within one-quarter mile of the dealer's place of business. The redemp-
36 tion center must have a written agreement with the dealer to accept
37 containers on behalf of the dealer; and the redemption center's hours of
38 operation must cover at least 9:00 a.m. through 7:00 p.m. daily or in
39 the case of a mobile redemption center, the hours of operation must
40 cover at least four consecutive hours between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m.
41 daily. The dealer must post a conspicuous, permanent sign, meeting the
42 size and color specifications set forth in subdivision two of this
43 section, open to public view, identifying the location and hours of
44 operation of the affiliated redemption center or mobile redemption
45 center; and

46 (b) The dealer provides, at a minimum, a consecutive two hour period
47 between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. daily whereby the dealer will accept up
48 to two hundred forty containers, per redeemer, per day, and posts a
49 conspicuous, permanent sign, meeting the size and color specifications
50 set forth in subdivision two of this section, open to public view, iden-
51 tifying those hours. The dealer may not change the hours of redemption
52 without first posting a thirty day notice; and

53 (c) The dealer's primary business is the sale of food or beverages for
54 consumption off-premises, and the dealer's place of business is less
55 than ten thousand square feet in size.

1 4. A deposit initiator shall accept from a dealer or operator of a
2 redemption center any empty beverage container of the design, shape,
3 size, color, composition and brand sold or offered for sale by the
4 deposit initiator, and shall pay the dealer or operator of a redemption
5 center the refund value of each such beverage container as established
6 by section 27-1005 of this title. A deposit initiator shall accept and
7 redeem all such empty beverage containers from a dealer or redemption
8 center without limitation on quantity.

9 5. A deposit initiator's or distributor's failure to pick up empty
10 beverage containers, including containers processed in a reverse vending
11 machine, from a redemption center, dealer or the operator of a reverse
12 vending machine, in a timely manner and at reasonable times as provided
13 by the department pursuant to the regulations promulgated pursuant to
14 paragraph (c) of subdivision eight of this section shall be a violation
15 of this title.

16 6. In addition to the refund value of a beverage container as estab-
17 lished by section 27-1005 of this title, a deposit initiator shall pay
18 to any dealer or operator of a redemption center a handling fee of three
19 and one-half cents for each beverage container accepted by the deposit
20 initiator from such dealer or operator of a redemption center. Begin-
21 ning April first, two thousand twenty-six, the handling fee will be six
22 cents. Payment of the handling fee shall be as compensation for collect-
23 ing, sorting and packaging of empty beverage containers for transport
24 back to the deposit initiator or its designee. Payment of the handling
25 fee may not be conditioned on the purchase of any goods or services, nor
26 may such payment be made out of the refund value account established
27 pursuant to section 27-1012 of this title. A distributor who does not
28 initiate deposits on a type of beverage container is considered a dealer
29 only for the purpose of receiving a handling fee from a deposit initi-
30 ator.

31 7. A deposit initiator on a brand shall accept from a distributor who
32 does not initiate deposits on that brand any empty beverage containers
33 of that brand accepted by the distributor from a dealer or operator of a
34 redemption center and shall reimburse the distributor the refund value
35 of each such beverage container, as established by section 27-1005 of
36 this title. In addition, the deposit initiator shall reimburse such
37 distributor for each such beverage container the handling fee estab-
38 lished under subdivision six of this section. Without limiting the
39 rights of the department or any person, firm or corporation under this
40 subdivision or any other provision of this section, a distributor shall
41 have a civil right of action to enforce this subdivision, including,
42 upon three days notice, the right to apply for temporary and preliminary
43 injunctive relief against continuing violations, and until arrangements
44 for collection and return of empty containers or reimbursement of such
45 distributor for such deposits and handling fees are made.

46 8. It shall be the responsibility of the deposit initiator or distrib-
47 utor to provide to a dealer or redemption center a sufficient number of
48 bags, cartons, or other suitable containers, at no cost, for the packag-
49 ing, handling and pickup of empty beverage containers that are not
50 redeemed through a reverse vending machine. The bags, cartons, or
51 containers must be provided by the deposit initiator or distributor on a
52 schedule that allows the dealer or redemption center sufficient time to
53 sort the empty beverage containers prior to pick up by the deposit
54 initiator or distributor. In addition:

55 (a) When picking up empty beverage containers, a deposit initiator or
56 distributor shall not require a dealer or redemption center to load

1 their own bags, cartons or containers onto or into the deposit initi-
2 ator's or distributor's vehicle or vehicles or provide the staff or
3 equipment needed to do so. However, where pallets or skids, bags,
4 cartons or containers are readily movable only by means of a forklift or
5 similar equipment, a deposit initiator or distributor may require a
6 dealer or redemption center to move or load such items at no cost using
7 a forklift or similar equipment belonging to the dealer or redemption
8 center provided that such equipment and appropriate staff are readily
9 available.

10 (b) A deposit initiator or distributor shall not require empty
11 containers to be counted at a location other than the redemption center
12 or dealer's place of business. The dealer or redemption center shall
13 have the right to be present at the count. In the event of a discrepancy
14 between the count of the dealer or redemption center and the count of
15 the deposit initiator or distributor for containers not processed
16 through a reverse vending machine all such empty containers shall be
17 retained and a re-count may be requested. The re-count may be held at a
18 location other than the redemption center or dealer's place of business
19 only if the dealer or redemption center agrees and is present.

20 (c) A deposit initiator or distributor shall pick up empty beverage
21 containers from the dealer or redemption center in a timely manner and
22 at reasonable times [~~and intervals~~] as determined in rules or regu-
23 lations promulgated by the department no later than April first, two
24 thousand twenty-six.

25 9. No person shall return or assist another to return to a dealer or
26 redemption center an empty beverage container for its refund value if
27 such container had previously been accepted for redemption by a dealer,
28 redemption center, or deposit initiator who initiates deposits on bever-
29 age containers of the same brand.

30 10. A redeemer, dealer, distributor or redemption center shall not
31 knowingly redeem an empty beverage container on which a deposit was
32 never paid in New York state.

33 11. Notwithstanding the provisions of subdivision two of section
34 27-1009 of this title, a deposit initiator or distributor shall accept
35 and redeem beverage containers as provided in this title, if the dealer
36 or operator of a redemption center shall have accepted and paid the
37 refund value of such beverage containers.

38 12. No person shall intentionally program, tamper with, render inaccu-
39 rate, or circumvent the proper operation of a reverse vending machine to
40 wrongfully elicit deposit monies when no valid, redeemable beverage
41 container has been placed in and properly processed by the reverse vend-
42 ing machine.

43 13. The department and the department of taxation and finance are
44 authorized to audit any reverse vending machine.

45 § 5. Paragraph (b) of subdivision 3 of section 27-1011 of the environ-
46 mental conservation law, as added by section 1 of part PP of chapter 58
47 of the laws of 2018, is amended and a new subdivision 4 is added to read
48 as follows:

49 (b) comply with minimum post-consumer recycled material content and
50 hole diameter limitations as defined in rules and regulations promulgat-
51 ed by the department no later than April first, two thousand
52 twenty-five, and is recyclable and indicates a resin identification
53 code.

54 4. (a) Effective January first, two thousand twenty-six, every glass
55 beverage container shall contain a minimum percentage of thirty-five
56 percent post-consumer glass and every aluminum beverage container shall

1 contain a minimum percentage of thirty-five percent post-consumer alumi-
2 num.

3 (b) Effective January first, two thousand twenty-nine, every polyethy-
4 lene terephthalate (PET) beverage container shall contain no less than
5 twenty-five percent post-consumer PET.

6 (c) Effective January first, two thousand thirty-one, every plastic
7 beverage container shall contain no less than thirty percent post-con-
8 sumer plastic.

9 (d) The department may, by regulation, grant a reduction or waiver of
10 the percentage requirement established pursuant to this subdivision if
11 the department finds and determines that it is technologically infeasible
12 for the bottler to achieve the specified percent requirement.

13 § 6. Paragraph c of subdivision 3 of section 27-1012 of the environ-
14 mental conservation law, as added by section 8 of part SS of chapter 59
15 of the laws of 2009, is amended to read as follows:

16 c. all withdrawals from the refund value account during such quarter,
17 including all reimbursements paid pursuant to subdivision two of this
18 section, all service charges on the account, provided that such service
19 charges do not exceed the maximum amount authorized by the commissioner,
20 and all payments made pursuant to subdivision four of this section; and

21 § 7. Paragraph a of subdivision 4 of section 27-1012 of the environ-
22 mental conservation law, as added by section 8 of part SS of chapter 59
23 of the laws of 2009, is amended to read as follows:

24 a. Quarterly payments. An amount equal to eighty percent of the
25 balance outstanding in the refund value account at the close of each
26 quarter shall be paid to the commissioner of taxation and finance at the
27 time the report provided for in subdivision three of this section is
28 required to be filed. The commissioner of taxation and finance may
29 require that the payments be made electronically. The remaining twenty
30 percent of the balance outstanding at the close of each quarter shall be
31 the monies of the deposit initiator and may be withdrawn from such
32 account by the deposit initiator. However, until April first, two thou-
33 sand twenty-eight, a deposit initiator who initiates deposits on refill-
34 able beverage containers or beverage containers with a state-specific
35 universal product code may be entitled to pay an amount equal to seven-
36 ty-five percent of the balance outstanding in the refund value account
37 specifically attributable to refillable beverage containers or beverage
38 containers bearing such product code at the close of each quarter to the
39 commissioner of taxation and finance at the time the report provided for
40 in subdivision three of this section is required to be filed. No later
41 than October first, two thousand twenty-seven, the commissioner of taxa-
42 tion and finance shall submit a report to the governor and the legisla-
43 ture regarding the implementation of the state-specific universal prod-
44 uct code and an evaluation of its effectiveness in decreasing fraud. If
45 the provisions of this section with respect to such account have not
46 been fully complied with, each deposit initiator shall pay to such
47 commissioner at such time, in lieu of the amount described in the
48 preceding sentence, an amount equal to the balance which would have been
49 outstanding on such date had such provisions been fully complied with.
50 The commissioner of taxation and finance may require that the payments
51 be made electronically.

52 § 8. Subdivision 12 of section 27-1012 of the environmental conserva-
53 tion law, as amended by section 6 of part F of chapter 58 of the laws of
54 2013, is amended to read as follows:

55 12. a. Each deposit initiator shall provide a report to the department
56 describing all the types of beverage containers on which it initiates

1 deposits. The report shall include the product name, type of beverage,
2 size and composition of the beverage container, universal product code,
3 the presence of any state-specific universal product code and the
4 percentage of products covered by such code, the methods used to prevent
5 the fraudulent sale and redemption of beverage containers, and any other
6 information the department may require. Upon request, a deposit initi-
7 ator shall also provide to the department a copy of the container label
8 or a picture of any beverage container sold or offered for sale in this
9 state on which it initiates a deposit. Such information shall be
10 provided in a form as prescribed by the department. The department may
11 require that such forms be filed electronically.

12 b. A bottler may place on a beverage container a state-specific
13 universal product code [~~or other distinctive marking that is specific to~~
14 ~~the state or used only in the state and any other states with laws~~
15 ~~substantially similar to this title~~] as a means of preventing the sale
16 or redemption of beverage containers on which no deposit was initiated.

17 c. A bottler or deposit initiator shall notify the department, in a
18 form prescribed by the department, whenever a beverage container or
19 beverage container label is revised by altering the universal product
20 code, or whenever the container on which a universal product code
21 appears is changed in size, composition or glass color, or whenever the
22 container or container label on which a universal product code appears
23 is changed to include a state-specific universal product code [~~that is~~
24 ~~unique to the state or used only in the state and any other states with~~
25 ~~laws substantially similar to this title~~].

26 § 9. Section 27-1014 of the environmental conservation law, as amended
27 by section 10 of part SS of chapter 59 of the laws of 2009, is amended
28 to read as follows:

29 § 27-1014. Authority to promulgate rules and regulations.

30 In addition to the authority of the commissioner, under sections
31 27-1007, 27-1009, 27-1011, 27-1012, and 27-1013 of this title, the
32 commissioner shall have the power to promulgate rules and regulations
33 necessary and appropriate for the administration of this title.

34 § 10. Section 27-1005 of the environmental conservation law, as added
35 by section 4 of part SS of chapter 59 of the laws of 2009, is amended to
36 read as follows:

37 § 27-1005. Refund value.

38 No person shall sell or offer for sale a beverage container in this
39 state unless the deposit on such beverage container is or has been
40 collected by a registered deposit initiator and unless such container
41 has a refund value of not less than five cents, and beginning April 1,
42 2026 a refund value of not less than ten cents, which is clearly indi-
43 cated thereon as provided in section 27-1011 of this title.

44 § 11. This act shall take effect April 1, 2025; provided, however,
45 that section two of this act shall take effect April 1, 2026. Effective
46 immediately, the addition, amendment and/or repeal of any rule or regu-
47 lation necessary for the implementation of this act on its effective
48 date are authorized to be made and completed on or before such effective
49 date.