



March 27, 2011

OKRA Supports

Oklahoma Beverage Container Return Legislation

The Oklahoma Recycling Association (OKRA) enthusiastically supports beverage container return legislation in Oklahoma. Such a bill will encourage more Oklahomans to recycle, reduce costs incurred by existing recycling programs and government agencies charged with collecting litter, and creates new jobs while helping to secure existing jobs.

Encourage More Oklahomans to Recycle

Many thousands of Oklahomans already recycle without the financial incentive. In fact some Oklahomans choose to pay extra for the convenience of curbside recycling. Moreover, we know from the example of the eleven states that already have container deposit laws that many more Oklahomans will start recycling when they are paid to do so.

Other Oklahomans may choose not to redeem their beverage containers themselves. Instead they will donate their empty bottles and cans to their churches, youth groups, and other civic institutions. These organizations will redeem the beverage containers as fundraisers.

Reduce Costs for Existing Recycling Programs and Government Agencies

Community recycling programs are an expense for the communities that they serve. Some recyclable commodities such as paper, cardboard, and metals command prices that more than offset the expense of collecting and transporting them to markets. Materials such as plastic and glass do not in most instances.

Many Oklahomans already choose to sell their aluminum cans instead of giving them to their local recycling program. A container return bill will no doubt increase the number of residents who choose to do so. Containers that continue to find their way to community recycling centers will be redeemed by those programs for a profit. Plastic and glass beverage containers will provide the largest gain.

Beverage container return legislation will both decrease the number of beverage containers that community recycling programs have to handle, since many consumers will want the deposits for themselves, and will increase the funds that community recycling programs will get for the beverage containers they do receive. These programs will be able to collect the deposits on behalf of their communities.

Reduce Costs for Government Agencies

Oklahoma Department of Transportation estimates it costs more than \$63 per mile to remove litter from state highways. Beverage container return legislation would greatly reduce the approximately \$4 million per year on litter clean up.

According to ODOT, it is predominately pedestrians younger than 25 who cause “greater than 76 percent of all littering in parks, roadside parks or recreational areas.” This bill will be a signification motivator for this age group as they seek to collect their deposits and spend that money on other purchases.

Creates and Maintains Jobs

While the economy has lost jobs in other sectors, Advanced Environmental Recycling Technologies (AERT) has opened a plastic recycling plant in Watts, Oklahoma. This is in addition to jobs at ten other plants throughout Oklahoma that turn recyclable materials into new products (www.recycleok.org/business-tips.php) and others that sort and transport recyclable materials.

Who is OKRA?

OKRA is the statewide recycling organization for Oklahoma. The organization includes community recycling coordinators, advocates, and commercial recyclers. OKRA hosts an annual seminar that helps Oklahoma communities and businesses stay informed on current trends in recycling and integrated solid waste management. OKRA also keeps the state recycling community informed of current trends through their listserv, online newsletter and website. OKRA supports container return efforts on the national level as well.

For more information about OKRA please contact President Traci Phillips at info@recycleok.org or visit www.recycleok.org.