

TO: Save The Bay Rhode Island
FROM: The Mellman Group
DATE: February 27, 2025
RE: Public Support For A Bottle Bill In Rhode Island

This analysis represents the findings of a survey of a sample of 400 registered voters in Rhode Island. Interviews were conducted February 4-10, 2025, with live interviewers calling landlines and cell phones, as well as text-to-online interviews. The margin of error is +/-4.9% overall at a 95% level of confidence, and higher for subgroups.

Our recently completed survey reveals Rhode Islanders are concerned about the failures of the state's current recycling system and support the bottle bill proposal being considered by the legislature. Even after arguments against and for the proposal, a majority favor a bottle bill by a double-digit margin. Most Rhode Islanders plan to participate by returning their beverage containers, with higher participation after hearing the location of return centers.

Voters are looking to the legislature to enact a bottle bill this year.

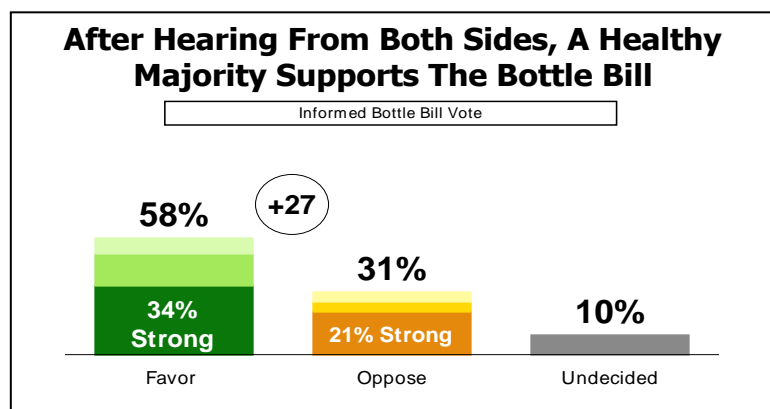
There Is Widespread Concern About The Current System And Landfill Capacity

Nearly three quarters (71%) are concerned that "Rhode Island's recycling system is not working" with "most beverage recyclables...ending up in landfills" including 46% who feel a great deal of concern. Similarly, 73% are concerned that the landfill is nearing capacity, with 47% saying it is a great concern.

A Healthy Majority Support The Bottle Bill Even After Opposition Messaging

In response to a basic description of the bottle bill as "a proposal....designed to increase recycling by requiring a ten-cent deposit on all purchases of beverages in bottles, cans, plastics or other recyclable materials" i a 55% majority express support for the legislation with just over a third (36%) opposed yielding a 19 point advantage.

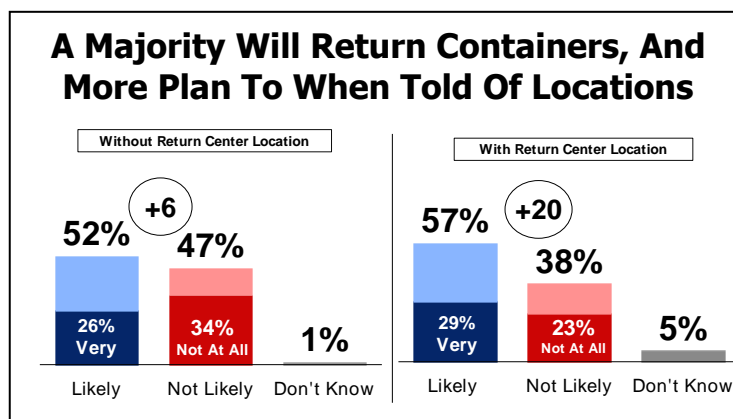
After voters hear arguments from both sidesⁱⁱ, support increases to 58%, with less than a third (31%) opposed, for a 27-point advantage.



Support increases across all demographics. After this exchange, the bottle bill is favored by over 60% of Democrats and unaffiliated voters, and 38% of Republicans – and across gender, race, age, college education, and county.

Most Plan To Participate By Returning Their Own Bottles

A majority say they are likely to participate in the program. We tested two versions of this question, one which included information on return center locations, and another without it.ⁱⁱⁱ In both, a majority of voters reported they would return bottles, but 57% of voters reported they would when they knew about the locations.



This data confirms the breadth and depth of support for bottle bill legislation in Rhode Island.

ⁱ This proposal, also known as a bottle bill, is designed to increase recycling by requiring a ten-cent deposit on all purchases of beverages in bottles, cans, plastics or other recyclable materials. The deposit would be refunded when the used, empty containers are returned.

ⁱⁱ Supporters say this is a proven way to reduce litter in our streets, shorelines and waterways and fix our recycling system. Other states have been doing this for decades – including Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New York – and have 70% less beverage container litter. They also have much higher recycling rates of nearly 90%, while most of our containers end up in our landfill, which is nearing capacity. This is a proven way to fix the problems before they get worse.

Opponents say that this proposal will burden working families because it's essentially a tax, increasing the cost of a 12-pack of soda by \$1.20. Returning bottles will be particularly difficult for those in rural areas, the elderly, and those with disabilities. This proposal would also hurt Rhode Island's small businesses by incentivizing consumers to travel across state lines to buy beverages. We don't need another tax that could increase costs and hurt our economy.

ⁱⁱⁱ How likely would you be to bring your bottles and other beverage containers back for your 10 cent per container refund?

The return centers would be located in convenient locations such as supermarket parking lots, post offices and other public locations. How likely would you be to bring your bottles and other beverage containers to these return centers for your 10 cent per container refund?

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