Statement of the Container Recycling Institute Regarding Updating the Bottle Bill in Massachusetts

The mission of the Container Recycling Institute (CRI) is to make North America the global model for the collection and quality recycling of packaging materials. For beverage containers, the only systems that have been proven to deliver the high recycling rates (with high quality of materials) are container deposit systems (“bottle bills”). Other systems, such as curbside and drop-off programs, are ineffective as stand alone systems to increase beverage container recycling, since the majority of beverage containers are consumed away from homes with curbside recycling, and since the quality of materials from curbside programs is usually sub-optimal.

The Container Recycling Institute is disappointed in the outcome of Tuesday's election in Massachusetts to expand the current container deposit law, where 80% of deposit bottles get recycled in the state, while a mere 23% of non-deposit bottles get recycled. We are also disappointed because expanding the law would have reduced beverage container litter in Massachusetts, which now continues to be a problem. CRI understands that industries tend to avoid accepting responsibility for pollution caused by their products, as it adds costs to their operations. The beverage industry has made it clear that their priority is not to take responsibility for the pollution they create, even though they were responsible for more than 9 million tons of empty plastic, glass and aluminum beverage containers littering the landscape and filling waste disposal sites in the United States (in 2010).

Though this loss is a setback in Massachusetts, the overwhelming trend in other states with container deposit systems, including New York, Connecticut, Oregon, Maine, and Hawaii, has been towards expansion. In fact, as recently as August of this year, 62% of Massachusetts voters polled were in favor of expansion.

The outcome in Massachusetts is due to the relentless and deceptive advertising that the “No on 2” campaign launched early and maintained throughout the election cycle, where they outspent the “Yes” campaign 6 to 1. Though the opponents’ misstatements of fact were reported in the press, those reports reached far fewer people than the deceptive TV ads, which were shown repeatedly. The “no on 2” campaign also placed campaign materials in beverage aisles of grocery stores and dropped leaflets into customers’ grocery bags.

Container deposits remain the only recycling option that has ever come close to achieving the recycling goals set not only by the glass, plastic, and aluminum industries but also by the beverage companies. The growing demand for recycled containers continues to dwarf the supply delivered by curbside programs. Though we are disappointed, we have hope knowing the current bottle bill in Massachusetts will continue to work on making a positive impact on the environment and the manufacturing economy in Massachusetts.