

EDITORIAL

Bottle law can do more for NY

Keep more material out of landfills

The nickel charge on many beverage bottles has done a lot of good in its 30-plus years in New York. It's kept tens of billions of containers from ending up in landfills or as roadside litter, while bolstering the message about the importance of recycling.

But it is overdue for an overhaul. Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo proposes to expand what's known as the bottle bill beyond water, soda and beer to include most nonalcoholic beverage containers — glass, plastic and cans — on the list of those eligible for redemption. That includes products like sports drinks, energy drinks, ready-to-drink iced teas and iced coffees, and fruit and vegetable drinks.

But the ultimate success of the expansion Cuomo will present in his budget address Tuesday will depend on the details of the rollout and how far he is willing to push it.

Most of the public still does not recycle plastic or glass containers. Long Island recycles less than 20 percent of its garbage; the national average is 35 percent. But the state says 65 percent of bottles and cans with nickel deposits on them are redeemed. So putting more bottles into the deposit program is a good thing; state officials say it would capture another 1.4 billion containers per year. And ignore beverage companies crying about the prospect of decreased sales. It didn't happen in the early 1980s when Coke and Pepsi complained about the original bottle bill.

Also welcome: Cuomo's order to the Department of Environmental Conservation to study the possibility of adding wine and liquor bottles to the bill. They should be included; objections from liquor stores reluctant to collect returnables can be met by letting bottles be brought to redemption centers common elsewhere in the state.

Also welcome: Cuomo's order to the Department of Environmental Conservation to study the possibility of adding wine and liquor bottles to the bill. They should be included; objections from liquor stores reluctant to collect returnables can be met by letting bottles be brought to redemption centers common elsewhere in the state.

Also welcome: Cuomo's order to the Department of Environmental Conservation to study the possibility of adding wine and liquor bottles to the bill. They should be included; objections from liquor stores reluctant to collect returnables can be met by letting bottles be brought to redemption centers common elsewhere in the state.

Also welcome: Cuomo's order to the Department of Environmental Conservation to study the possibility of adding wine and liquor bottles to the bill. They should be included; objections from liquor stores reluctant to collect returnables can be met by letting bottles be brought to redemption centers common elsewhere in the state.

Make it a quarter for wine and liquor bottles when they come on board. None of this will cost consumers anything — if they return the bottles. Use the entire state share of the money from unredeemed bottles to support recycling programs, instead of just a portion, as is the case now.

Much of the impetus for the governor's proposal comes from the ongoing recycling crisis, which began when China drastically cut back on material it would accept from U.S. sources. The commodity affected most was glass. In renegotiating contracts, some Long Island municipalities have removed glass from their recycling programs, which means it's being dumped in landfills. Cuomo's changes would procure more recyclable glass. Now the state must help build a local market for that glass. The DEC has worked with recycling industry officials and municipalities on creating a path forward, a promising development.

Municipalities can play a role, too. In Rockland County, the solid waste management authority crushes the glass it collects and uses it as roadbed material and backfill for pipes for drainage, water and sewers. Villages, towns, counties and the state could include specifications or bonuses in contracts for using crushed glass instead of gravel or stone. Brookhaven has a pilot program with a New Jersey glass recycler.

Expand the bottle bill, yes. But make sure everything else is in place to ensure its success for another 30-plus years. — *The editorial board*



A bottled iced-tea label indicates redemption in California and Maine.

MATT DAVIES



■ See more Matt Davies cartoons: newsday.com/matt

LETTERS

The gov't shutdown and the wall

I read with interest "Readers weigh in on the wall" [Opinion, Jan. 10]. I noticed that no writer, pro or con, mentioned the realities of building the wall. One ought to ask how many miles of border wall already exist. How many more miles must be constructed? What is the terrain? What are the logistics? What are the political issues to be overcome? Where would the wall be situated where the Rio Grande is the border? How are we to compensate private landowners whose land must be taken? How long would it take to build, and how much would it actually cost?

Before such massive construction, there are considerably more questions to be asked — and answered by experts. Why aren't more folks posing these questions? Who buys a product without

knowing what it is?

*Betty Simon,
East Northport*

■ The government is making people work without pay. So when was the 13th Amendment to the Constitution repealed? It eliminated slavery and involuntary servitude.

*Sheldon Wortzman,
North Bellmore*

■ What is wrong with Congress? President Donald Trump campaigned for and promised to build a wall on the Southern border to stem the flow of people entering illegally. Didn't he win the election on many such promises? Didn't he also promise to have Mexico pay for the wall?

Well, go after him. Do a media blitz, make him keep his promise and get a check from Mexico and tell him, if

he does, Congress will match it with money for border security. Stop this nonsense of going back and forth with no progress toward reopening the government.

*Ralph Fierro Jr.,
Kings Park*

■ Eight hundred thousand federal employees without pay! Would it kill mortgage companies, banks, utilities and credit card companies to help out these families by not sending bills, or give them a break for a month on payments until they get on their feet again? Republicans and this president are hurting families that live paycheck to paycheck. Financial institutions can give these people a break with their bills. Great public relations!

*James Klein,
East Patchogue*