

8 TRUTHS ABOUT RECYCLING REFUNDS

1

Recycling refund programs are incredibly popular among consumers.

A [recent public opinion poll](#) showed that 90% of voters in the 10 existing recycling refund states support these programs. Recycling refund programs have been in these states for decades and enjoy a strong record of support across political, demographic, and socioeconomic groups. Consumer and equity organizations have been largely supportive of these programs.

2

Recycling refund programs enjoy bipartisan support.

Progressive consumer organizations – US PIRG, Consumer Action, and National Consumers League – [have endorsed principles](#) around effective recycling refund programs. Conservative free market and taxpayer watchdogs – including the [R Street Institute](#) and [National Taxpayers Union](#) – are also outspoken champions of well-designed recycling refund programs. Additionally, a survey found that support for recycling refund programs was greater than 70% with Democrats, Independents, and Republicans. In short, the support for recycling refunds spans the political spectrum.

3

Recycling refund programs create net savings for municipalities.

More than [30 studies](#) show recycling refund programs generate significant financial returns for municipalities and ultimately save local governments money. Municipalities would handle and pay for less waste and recycling and would incur lower costs from litter cleanup, street sweeping, and storm drain cleanout. Recyclables processed generally become more valuable under recycling refund programs, and material recovery facilities could operate more efficiently due to less contamination.

4

Material recovery facilities (MRFs) would maintain stable revenue streams.

Recycling refund programs can be structured such that revenue streams for MRFs within the system [make up](#) for lost revenue from less beverage container recycling through curbside, including temporary payments to help with the transition.

5

The private sector would shoulder the program cost, alleviating any financial burden on taxpayers.

New recycling refund programs would be funded by the private sector, and the financial burden would be placed on beverage distributors and importers should there be a gap between the program's revenues (e.g., unredeemed deposits, scrap value of material) and its costs. In contrast, in non-recycling refund states, taxpayers absorb the costs of recycling beverage containers through the local taxes paid to support less effective curbside recycling programs. Companies that profit from selling and distributing beverages, not taxpayers, should shoulder the responsibility of recycling these packages.

6

Recycling refund programs create jobs and additional income for families.

A Container Recycling Institute [report](#) found that recycling refunds create 11 to 38 times more jobs than a curbside recycling system for beverage containers. Also, in some states, recycling refund systems help provide important primary and supplemental income for residents who collect beverage containers to return for the refund value. The [New York Post](#) highlighted how some consumers make \$1000 a day collecting and redeeming bottles and cans and that's in a system with a small refund value of five cents per container.

7

Recycling refund programs are convenient for all consumers.

Recycling refund programs are most effective and efficient when all consumers can easily return their containers and redeem their refund. With that in mind, new programs can be designed to include a strong consumer convenience standard to help ensure more people can participate in the program, no matter location, socioeconomic status, or physical ability. For instance, programs can include mobile redemption units that serve those who may be physically impaired or do not have a car.

8

Retailers have options for how to participate in recycling refund programs, which can drive additional sales.

Retailers are an important partner in recycling refund programs. Ideally, retailers would host a redemption mechanism, which could include bag drops, reverse vending machines, or in-store redemption. These options allow retailers to participate and support environmental sustainability. According to a recent public survey, 69% said if they received a refund at a retailer, they would spend all or some of the refund at the retail location where they redeemed. Retailers can take advantage of various incentives by hosting a redemption mechanism. For example, a consumer could opt to visit a certain store because it offers beverage container redemption and then shop inside the store with the coupon the consumer opted to receive rather than cash because the store offered a small premium on top of the refund value to take the store credit.