

## US Congress to consider bag tax and bottle deposit

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Two US federal legislators have introduced separate pieces of legislation that would tax single-use plastic bags beginning in 2010, and impose a 5 cent nationwide deposit on plastic water and soft drink single-serve bottles.

The bottle deposit bill introduced April 22 is the second attempt by US Rep. Ed Markey, at enacting a nationwide deposit on such containers, a previous attempt having failed in 2007.

Eleven states nationwide have bottle deposits on soft drinks bottles, and six of those states extend the deposits to water bottles as well. New York and Connecticut just expanded their bottle deposit bills this year to include water, and a pending proposal to add deposits on bottles in Massachusetts is part of the state's budget proposal that is nearing approval.

At least 10 other state legislatures are looking at bottle-bill proposals. But only Massachusetts and Oregon — which is considering expanding its bill again to include teas and energy drinks — are considered strong contenders to adopt additional legislation this year. Indiana and New Mexico already have rejected bottle-bill proposals.

According to the Container Recycling Institute in Glastonbury, Connecticut, the recycling rate of carbonated PET bottles in 2006 was 71.2% in the 11 states in the US with bottle deposit bills compared to 27% in the other 39 states. CRI said that the recycling rate in 2006 for non-carbonated beverages, including water, was 35.2% in states with deposit laws and 13.6% in the states without bottle deposit laws.

US Rep Jim Moran, who co-sponsored the bottle deposit bill, also introduced on April 22 the Plastic Bag Reduction Act of 2009 which would place a 5 cent fee on grocery bags, dry cleaning bags, take-out food bags, retail bags and service station bags, starting January 1.

Under the proposal, that fee would escalate to 25 cents starting January 1, 2015.

San Francisco, Malibu and Fairfield, in California, and Westport, Connecticut, have banned plastic bags and Seattle voters will vote August 18 on whether to place a 20 cent tax on plastic bags at checkout lines. A 5 cent fee on plastic bags in Toronto, Canada, goes into effect on June 1.

A bag ban in Manhattan Beach was overturned in court in January, but the city has appealed that ruling. In addition, savethebag.com has filed a lawsuit to overturn a plastic bag ban approved for San Jose, but not yet in effect.

Eight states are currently considering proposals to place fees ranging from 5-25 cents on plastic disposals bags, including California where two separate proposals to enact 25 cent fees on paper and plastic bags have been approved and sent to the Assembly Committee on Appropriations.

Two nationwide US grocers, Whole Foods Market and Trader Joe's, no longer offer plastic bags, and last week, Ikea Canada said it would stop carrying plastic bags July 1.

Earlier this week, the four largest US plastic bag manufacturers, all members of the Progressive Bag Affiliates group of the American Chemistry Council, pledged to use 40% recycled content in their plastic carryout bags by 2015.