

In 1972,
Michiganders
consumed
enough
beer cans
to cross the
Mackinac
Bridge
13,000 times.



Yep, if laid end to end, our beer cans alone would cross Big Mac 13,000 times. Obviously, we Michiganders drink a lot of beer-- make that, we drink a lot of beer in throwaway containers; in 1972, about 868,000,000 cans of the stuff, not to mention beer bottles or soft drink containers.

The containers are the problem: whether glass, aluminum or steel, they uglify our roads and parks, they fill up our landfills sooner than necessary, and they waste vast amounts of energy. Throwaways cost Michigan millions of dollars for solid waste disposal and litter pickup, as well as trillions of BTU's annually. Clearly, we are paying the price for a use-it-once-and-throw-it-away culture.

The reason is simple: it's more profitable for the giant container, beverage, and supermarket corporations to deal in one-way containers. So they spend hundreds of millions in advertising to convince folks to buy in throwaways-- containers that actually cost more than returnables. The returnable beverage bottle, once the standard of the beverage industry, is now shunted for 'convenience'.

But it is not as profitable for the public which must buy throwaways. The consumer/taxpayer must pay for the container, for the container's disposal, and then again for litter pickup... and all the while suffering through energy 'problems' while the beverage industry continues to churn out billions of throwaways each year.

The state of Oregon has found a solution to the many problems caused by throwaway containers: place a refund value on the containers, giving people an incentive to return them for the deposit. Since October, 1972, it's been a resounding success; beverage container litter is down by 90%, bottlers are reporting a 93% monthly return rate, and total solid waste bulk is reduced by an estimated 4-6%. In addition, energy conservation is practiced in a painless way: the energy saved in one year is enough to heat homes of 2% of Oregon's population... the equivalent of more than a million gallons of gas.

Oregon's success can be Michigan's lesson: a measure now before the Michigan House modelled after Oregon's statute would make Michigan beverage containers fully returnable. It's a sensible solution to the practical problem of the throwaway container.

House Bill 4926 (referred to the House Consumers and Agriculture Committee) needs your support. Please write a short letter now to your State Representative explaining your interest and urging support for HB4926. The address is: Honorable _____ (name), House of Representatives, Lansing, MI, 48901.

Time is short; please write now. For further information on how you can help, contact the Michigan Returnable Coalition. For a cleaner landscape and for energy conservation, HB 4926 is a must.

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