

# News

## Oregon Lawmakers OK Changes to Landmark Bottle Redemption Law Amid Concerns Over Homelessness, Drugs

By **CLAIRE RUSH**  
Associated Press

Oregon lawmakers approved changes to the state's landmark bottle redemption law on Wednesday, allowing redemption sites that some say have become magnets for drugs and homelessness to refuse returns of empty beverage containers during nighttime hours.

The trailblazing law to reduce littering by incentivizing recycling helped cement the state's reputation as a leader in the emerging environmental movement. It has also become a financial security net for many, including those experiencing homelessness.

The legislation was drafted in response to concerns that the nation's first "bottle bill," signed into law in 1971, needed an update to address its interplay with the dual fentanyl addiction and homelessness crises in Oregon.

"This bill is responsive to concerns from retailers both large and small, as well as some of our constituents," said Democratic state Rep. Mark Gamba, who carried the bill on the House floor, adding that it would "help to create a balance

in our redemption system while maintaining the program we all seek to protect."

The bill passed the state House with broad bipartisan support, 48-4. It previously passed the state Senate 28-1.

Democratic state Rep. Pam Marsh, who was among the four representatives to vote against the bill, had previously voiced her opposition during a committee hearing last week.

Marsh said she worries the bill will undermine access to bottle and can redemption sites for people "who need to turn in cans and bottles for immediate return because they actually need those dimes and those quarters to buy dinner, to help pay rent, to take care of basic life needs."

Consumers currently pay a 10-cent deposit on eligible beverage cans and bottles. They get that deposit back when returning them at stores or redemption centers, which can hand count containers or provide counting machines and drop-off areas. People can sign up for accounts in which their refunds are deposited or choose cash redemptions.

The state's bottle drop program had over a million account holders last

year, according to the Oregon Beverage Recycling Cooperative, which operates the program on behalf of its distributor members.

"From its inception, Oregon's Bottle Bill has helped protect Oregon's ocean, beaches, roadsides and special places," the cooperative said in its 2024 annual report, adding that hundreds of thousands of residents used redemptions "to save for college or disability support and to save on groceries."

In recent years, how-

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ever, some residents and store owners, particularly in Portland, have become frustrated with redemptions and what they describe as negative impacts on their neigh-



Used beverage containers are seen in a bag outside the Glisan BottleDrop Redemption Center on Thursday, May 15, 2025, in Portland, Ore. (AP Photo/Jenny Kane)

borhoods and business operations.

Currently, stores must accept container returns when they are open, and owners of all-night convenience stores, particularly in Portland, have expressed concerns about employee safety. The bill passed by lawmakers Wednesday would allow stores to across the state to refuse container returns after 8 p.m.

In Portland, the bill would allow for alterna-

tive redemption sites, including possible mobile sites such as trucks that travel to different neighborhoods. Nonprofits would run the alternative sites for people who redeem containers every day, relieving the pressure on retailers, particularly downtown.

Stores in an area with an alternative drop site could limit or refuse hand-counted returns, with convenience stores specifically allowed to stop them at 6 p.m.

The proposal was supported by retailers and associations whose members include "canners" and waste pickers who collect containers for income.

In 2023, roughly 87% of eligible containers were returned for redemption, according to the Oregon Liquor and Cannabis Commission. That was the highest rate in the nation that year, according to the Oregon Beverage Recycling Cooperative.

## Members of Congress Rally Around Black Congresswoman Charged by Trump's ICE Officers

By **Lauren Burke**

At a large press conference on the House side of the U.S. Capitol, members of Congress rallied around Congresswoman LaMonica McIver (D-NJ). The members represented the diverse "tri-caucus" made up of many of the members of the Congressional Black Caucus, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, and the Congressional Women's Caucus. The three groups represent over half of the Democratic Caucus in the U.S. House. Though McIver was not present at the press event, she was on Capitol Hill attending meetings and House votes. She is also expected to be on national television on the evening of May 20. Yesterday, the New Jersey Congresswoman was charged with "impeding" and "assaulting" law enforcement outside of Delaney Hall Immigration Detention Center in Newark, New Jersey on May 9. The confrontation occurred after the arrest of Newark Mayor Ras Baraka but

last night the acting U.S. Attorney for the District of New Jersey, Alina Habba announced that the charges against Mayor Baraka were dropped. Rep. McIver was charged on the same day that the Trump Administration, through the Department of Justice, announced an agreement to pay the family of Ashley Babbitt \$5 million. Babbitt was shot dead by a member of the U.S. Capitol Police as she attempted to enter the floor of the U.S. House during the violent attack on the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021. The charges against Rep. McIver also fell on the same day as what would have been the 100th birthday of Malcolm X.

After three months of witnessing the Trump Administration arrest and deport individuals to a prison in El Salvador with no hearing beforehand and pressure law firms to complete work pro bono, members of Congress at the event in support of Rep. McIver appeared to have recent history front of mind. "We know exactly why we're here today. That's

because the President of the United States has weaponized his Department of Justice in an attempt to make a young congresswoman from New Jersey the focal point of his efforts to intimidate Congress into submission," said Rep. Yvette Clarke (D-NY), the Chairwoman of the Congressional Black Caucus during the crowded press event near the steps of the U.S. Capitol. "Let me be overwhelmingly clear. Congresswoman McIver has the full and unwavering support of the Congressional Black Caucus. Period," Clarke added. Rep. McIver, 38, entered Congress in September 2024 after winning a special election after the death of Congressman Donald Payne, Jr. "I'm standing here at a time that should make all of us as Americans truly afraid," said New Jersey Democrat Cory Booker.

Senator Booker shook hands and greeted New Jersey colleagues U.S. Representatives.

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