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OUR OPINIONS

Bottle bill would not work out Law would create another level of unneeded bureaucracy.

If it were to become law, the Tennessee bottle bill would be an administrative nightmare that wouldn't solve the litter problem it was supposed to address.

Under the legislation, Tennesseans would be charged an extra eight cents per beverage bottle or can. They could get a nickel back from that if they saved all their empties and brought them back to a redemption center. From there, the state would have to pick up the cans and bottles from the center and reimburse the center with the remaining three-cent handling fee.

Does anyone think the three cents per bottle or can really will cover all the expenses of running such a program? Is there any doubt this will add another layer of bureaucracy to state government?

The first attempt at passing a bottle bill in Tennessee came more than 20 years ago. Instead, in 1982, the state Legislature passed a tax on beer and soft drinks. Today, it generates \$5 million a year for counties to fund litter pickup, oftentimes by prisoners from the county jails.

These prisoners pick up all of the trash along the roadsides — not only bottles and cans, which comprise some 10 to 20 percent of trash found along roadways.

If deposit laws were such a good idea, states would have lined up to enact them. As it is, however, there are just 11 states with such laws on the books.

For a high sales tax state such as Tennessee, an extra \$1.92 per case of bottles or cans could be the deciding factor in shopping in a neighboring state such as Kentucky, where beverages would be cheaper.

What Tennessee needs instead of a bottle bill is a more comprehensive litter-control program that would include higher fines for those who decide to throw a bottle or a fast-food bag out the window of their cars. It's far better to stop people from using the roadways as their garbage can than to pick up the stuff after the fact.

Also, cans already are being recycled through private companies and landfills throughout the state. The proposal wouldn't do anything to address the paper products that are causing the real problem along Tennessee's roadsides.

Let's trash the bottle bill before it goes any further in the Legislature.
