

COLUMNS | Opinion *This piece expresses the views of its author(s), separate from those of this publication.*

Why small business owners support recycling reform | Opinion

Joshua Miller and Asher Schofield Guest columnists

June 1, 2025, 6:10 a.m. ET

Key Points AI-assisted summary ⓘ

Rhode Island business owners support a "bottle bill" (H6207/S996) and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) legislation to improve recycling and reduce litter.

They argue the current waste system burdens small businesses and the environment, while the proposed legislation would shift costs to packaging producers.

The refundable bottle deposit is emphasized as consumer-friendly and effective in reducing pollution.

As long-time small business owners in Providence, we've spent our careers balancing public policy and small business realities. We've also seen firsthand the increasing pressure that outdated waste systems place on our economy and environment.

Over the last 40 years [we have made tremendous strides in cleaning up Narragansett Bay](#), and we cannot afford to backslide. [As Rhode Islanders, we have a responsibility as stewards of the bay and Block Island Sound to ensure they remain vital pieces of our tourism and seafood economies.](#) That's why we support a modern "bottle bill" and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) legislation now before the General Assembly – [House Bill 6207](#) and [Senate Bill 996](#).

Bottle bills and EPR have worked in other states and countries to drastically reduce litter, increase recycling rates, and shift costs away from taxpayers and towns and onto the companies that create the packaging. They are common-sense, data-driven, and proven policies that put the responsibility where it belongs and not on small businesses and residents.

Let's be clear: [A bottle deposit is not a tax](#). It's a refundable deposit – consumers get their dime back when they recycle their container. That's not just environmentally effective, it's consumer friendly. These programs consistently reduce pollution, keep containers out of our streets and waterways, and put money back in the pockets of those who do their part.

Some industry voices have argued that these reforms would hurt small business. As owners and operators of local businesses and restaurants, we couldn't disagree more. We are already absorbing the hidden costs of a broken and inefficient recycling system – overflowing trash bins, higher hauling costs, and the constant cleanup of litter in our communities. A modern bottle bill, coupled with EPR, creates a level playing field and a cleaner, more efficient system. That helps businesses like ours.

Need a break? [Play the USA TODAY Daily Crossword Puzzle](#).

EPR ensures that producers – not Rhode Island municipalities or small business owners – fund the infrastructure to manage their waste. That's a forward-thinking, fiscally responsible shift we should all welcome. It is especially important given that commercial waste producers are not regulated and required to recycle as residential customers.

[Rhode Islanders deserve a clean environment, economic fairness, and a recycling system that works for everyone](#). H6207 and S996 deliver on all three. We encourage the General Assembly to lead on this issue and pass these long-overdue recycling reforms today.

Joshua Miller, a former state senator, is the owner of Trinity Brewhouse and The Hot Club, Providence. Asher Schofield is the owner of Frog & Toad, Providence.

