



Drafting national beverage container deposit system

Washington, D. C. - In July, U.S. Senator Tom Udall, D-N.M., and U.S. Representative Alan Lowenthal, D-Calif., circulated a draft outline of legislation to tackle the plastic waste pollution crisis, including a policy for a national beverage container deposit system. They received approximately 150 responses in comments and meeting requests.

Staff members have been revising the outline and working with legal counsel to draft the proposal into legislative language. The “discussion draft” will be circulated in the coming days with a process to provide feedback.

On Oct. 29, Udall and Lowenthall released the following joint statement, ahead of an announcement from The Coca--Cola Company, Keurig Dr. Pepper and PepsiCo about a new sustainability initiative. Udall and Lowenthal are drafting major legislation, to be introduced this fall, to tackle the plastic waste crisis.

“The environmental and health crisis caused by plastic pollution has captured the attention of people across the globe. In the United States, the equivalent of 65 trash trucks per day of plastic waste are dumped into the ocean. Recent scientific studies show that plastic particles are now everywhere – in rain water, in the food chain, and even inside our own bodies. It is beyond clear that bold action is needed more than ever.

“Today [Oct. 29], some of the largest companies in the United States, which share significant responsibility for the growing plastic waste crisis, are announcing their ‘every bottle back’ program and other plans. We are glad these beverage companies have acknowledged that they must play a role to prevent more damage from plastic pollution. But we’ve seen initiatives and goals like these from industry before, that shirk their real responsibility by placing the burden of action on consumers and taxpayers. Building bottles out of 100 percent recyclable material is welcome news, and taking ‘every bottle back’ is indeed a worthy goal, but we cannot just say the words and wish it so – we need to back up those words with real, concrete action. And other industries that sell single-use plastic products need to step up as well.

“In the coming days, we will be circulating a discussion draft of our landmark legislation to transform our antiquated and inefficient recycling system to put more responsibility on the producers who package and sell these products in our communities. One of the core principles of environmental law is ‘the polluter pays,’ and cleaning up and preventing plastic waste from entering our environment should not be the sole responsibility of the taxpayer. It is time for multi--billion-dollar companies who are seeing massive profits to step up and cover the costs of cleaning up the waste from their products. We welcome these beverage producers and all other interested stakeholders to provide constructive feedback and engagement in our efforts to turn the tide on the plastic waste tsunami that is flooding our communities and threatening our future.”