

# California allowing grocers, retailers to not collect bottles, cans for 60 more days

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As businesses around the country start to reopen after months of closures because of COVID-19, bottle and can redemption in California may not return to normal for quite some time.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom signed an executive order on June 22 that allows grocers and retailers to choose if they would like to redeem bottle and cans, or continue not to for 60 more days. That order had already been in place since early March.

Since that order was put in place, redemption centers have remained open for collection, but those inside grocery stores and retailers have been able to stop collection. The order was put in place so those stores could focus on getting essential items for customers during the pandemic, not can and bottle collection.

In addition to California, nine other states have a bottle and can redemption bill. Many of those have restarted or are phasing those programs back in.

Here's where the other states stand:

- Connecticut starting phasing back collection May 20;
- Hawaii has not shared a statewide update on its suspension;
- Iowa extended its suspension May 26;
- Maine has not shared a statewide update on its suspension;
- Massachusetts started to open redemptions June 5;
- Michigan began phasing in its redemptions June 15;
- New York resumed its collections June 3;
- Oregon started redemptions again in early June; and
- Vermont allowed retailers and redemption centers to decide for themselves at the end of April.

In Michigan, experts say 70 million cans and bottles went unredeemed each week of that state's partial closure, which just reopened fully about a week ago.

Scott Breen, the vice president of sustainability with the Can Manufacturers Institute, Washington, says about 40 to 45 percent of recycled cans and bottles come from redemption states, so reopening, even in phases, is important.

In California, bottle and can redemption rates were already declining before this. Heidi Sanborn, with The National Stewardship Action Council (NSAC), Sacramento, California, and Susan Collins, with the Container Recycling Institute, which is based in Culver City, California, both say reverse vending machines in California could help with redemptions for people have limited contact with others, or don't live near a redemption center.

\*\*This story has been edited to clarify that grocers and retailers can choose whether or not to redeem bottles and cans for the next 60 days, there was never a firm suspension on collection.