
Reduce and then recycle

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Being the tree-hugging vegetarian that I am, I care about the environment. So, while catching up on my daily dose of *Technician* last week, I became intrigued by the bottle ban coverage.

To recap, starting Oct. 1, all North Carolinians must either recycle their bottles or stand in contempt of the new recycling rules. However, this ban is only going to be enforced at landfills and other disposal facilities, places where it would be, quite literally, impossible to trace and blame the rogue plastic-bottle culprits.



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What does this mean? To break it down simply, the bottle ban means nothing to us on a microscopic level. This invisible enforcement isn't going to give individuals any reason to recycle. Rather, our taxes will be spent and raised to create jobs for someone to sift through all the trash at disposal facilities.

While I do believe it is important to keep items that can be recycled out of the landfill, I do not think this bottle ban will have an effect on the average Joe's decision to toss or recycle -- it still comes down to what is convenient. Sadly, there continues to be more bins for trash in North Carolina than there are for recycling. Until this changes, people will continue to choose the more readily accessible trashcans over the bin that gives their empty bottles a new life.

Here's another little known fact: recycling is a misnomer. The chasing arrows symbol found on plastic items surrounds a resin code, which is a number 1 through 7. These numbers

classify the item by what type of plastic was used to make it, higher quality plastics receive lower numbers and those that cannot be reutilized use higher numbers (plastic number 7).

For example, the clear plastic used for most soda bottles is polyethylene terephthalate, plastic number 1.

The word recycling isn't appropriate because when a bottle is "recycled," it becomes a plastic of a lower quality. Simply put, that soda bottle cannot be recycled into another number 1 bottle. It moves on to become a higher numbered plastic. In the truest sense, this isn't really recycling.

Yes, recycling is better than simply throwing things in the trash. However, we need to revisit the 3 R's: Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. Instead of recycling, people should be reducing their consumption of plastic products, especially those that cannot be recycled and do not break down in the landfill.

All that Styrofoam that Cookout uses? It'll be around forever, while the milkshake it contained disappeared in a few minutes.

Reusing is better than recycling. Consider toting a reusable Nalgene-esque bottle with water in it. Instead of visiting the overpriced vending machines, fill up at a water fountain for free when it gets empty. This will save tons of bottles from ending up in the landfill.

As a last resort, recycle. If your apartment complex doesn't give you this option, call the facilities manager and let them know that you'd like to see some recycling igloos. The City of Raleigh will provide this service for free -- all it takes is someone to care enough to call.

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