



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Testimony of Rep. Ron Russell supporting
**LD 2091, An Act Regarding Businesses' and Consumers' Use of
Returnable, Reusable and Refillable Containers for Food,
Beverages, and Nonfood Items**
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Good morning, Senator Ingwerson, Representative Pluecker, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry. My name is Ron Russell and I represent House District 17, the towns of Bucksport, Orland, Penobscot, and my hometown of Verona Island. I am here today in support of LD 2091, "An Act Regarding Businesses' and Consumers' Use of Returnable, Reusable and Refillable Containers for Food, Beverages, and Nonfood Items."

I support this bill because it just makes sense. In 1979, my wife and I bought our farm on Verona Island. Like most young couples with two very young children, we needed to save in any way we could. We had a large garden and canned much of our food. We saved all our glass jars for jelly or drinking glasses. We bought glass canning jars and used those in the same multi-purpose ways. We still follow those practices today. We do our best to recycle everything we can.

There was a small, overgrown, old orchard on the property that had been let go. After a lot of work, these ancient trees came back. We found an old cider press and every fall squeezed out cider, which we put in our saved glass jars or canning jars and shared them with family and friends. We found they brought them back. So, each fall we filled them again.

Later on, I noticed we had a few large red maple trees and many small ones. This began a 30-year project which is ongoing and now allows me to put out over 300 taps and make 20 to 25 gallons of maple syrup each year. I bought glass syrup jars to give the syrup away and again we found most everyone returned them. The cycle repeats each year. I do buy a few more jars each year, but only because a new tree or two is big enough to tap. I put them through a double sanitized wash cycle and they are used again. I am not a business, just a guy with a hobby that makes people happy. I do the same with honey from the bees I keep.

Someday about 15 to 20 years from now whoever owns "Welcome Home Farm", if they wish, will be able to put out thousands of taps on the 60 wooded acres that will be filled with an

abundance of large red maples. They may have to work a bit harder because red maples are a 50 to 1 ratio versus sugar maples that only need 40 gallons of sap to make a gallon of syrup. I hope this bill will make Maine a place where someone could have a business if they wanted to make syrup, sell the syrup, and wait for the glass jars to come back for them to sell some more.

I hope this bill passes and our state finds safe workable rules that can make a real dent in our disposable world. We plan to support Kate's business because we love a break from cooking and when we find it's good, we plan to bring our plates back for more.