

Michigan Every Day

By Patrick Sullivan and Carole Eberly

November 2, 1976
Voters approve the 10-cent deposit law

Conservation groups long sought a way to stop bottles and cans from littering Michigan's highways. The solution- a 10-cent deposit on most bottles and cans sold in the state as an incentive for people to pick up their trash. A simple solution but not one quickly embraced. Beverage manufacturers and retailers furiously fought the proposal. They managed to kill bills introduced in the state legislature, but things were slowly changing - the nation celebrated its first Earth Day in 1970, and Michigan welcomed a Republican governor who espoused conservation and environmental causes. Governor William G. Milliken sided with the conservationists over business interests and became the first to sign a citizen's group petition to enact the 10-cent bottle deposit law. Milliken's wife, Helen, led a grassroots campaign for the measure and raised money for the drive from garden clubs across the state. On Nov. 2, 1976, voters approved the law by a 2-to-1 margin, becoming the only state in the nation to have such a large deposit.