



WINE AND SPIRITS WHOLESALERS OF CONNECTICUT, INC.

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TESTIMONY OF WINE AND SPIRITS WHOLESALERS OF CONNECTICUT

In Support of:

Raised Bills SB 152 AN ACT PROHIBITING OPEN ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTAINERS IN MOTOR VEHICLES.

And

SB 1054 AN ACT PROHIBITING OPEN ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTAINERS IN MOTOR VEHICLES

The members of the Wine and Spirits Wholesalers of Connecticut ("WSWC") support these bills which will make unlawful, the possession of an open container of beverage alcohol in the passenger compartment of a motor. The proposed bills will:

- assist in the enforcement of the state's DWI laws,
- emphasis the importance of not driving while intoxicated;
- bring the state in to further compliance with the requirements Federal Highway Transportation Act (thus preventing the redirection of Federal Highway Transportation Funds); and
- provide four million dollars of funding for safety enforcement and hazard elimination programs.

Both bills provide a reasonable definition of the passenger compartment so that those who drive mini-vans, "SUVs" or similar vehicles which do not have a "trunk" area will not be in violation of the law. This is particularly important for the licensed salesmen employed by members of the WSWC who often transport open samples of beverage alcohol to licensed retailers. Also, both bills provide for the permitted exception for motor vehicles for hire which would allow for "open containers" in limousines and other such motor vehicles. Proposed Bill SB 152 has the added provision (section (2)) which exempts from the definition of "highway" parking areas for professional or college sporting event – i.e. the tailgating exemption. Lastly, both bills insure that there will not be a loss of funding dedicated to safety enforcement and hazard elimination programs as carried out by the Department of Transportation. These programs are very important as they include measures to combat drunk driving and underage drinking.

The members of the Wine and Spirits Wholesalers of Connecticut ("WSWC") are a key link in the 3-Tier System which controls the distribution of beverage alcohol in this country.

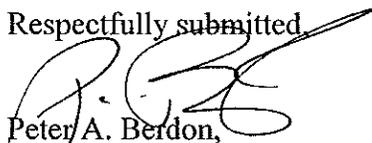
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They purchase beverage alcohol from suppliers and manufacturers and then market and sell those products to licensed retailers – restaurants and package stores. The members of the WSWC:

- are licensed and regulated by the state of Connecticut and the federal government;
- are responsible to insure that the wines and spirits brought in to the state by manufacturers and importers are sold and distributed only to licensed retailers (package stores and restaurant);
- collect and remit to the in excess of \$35 million dollars in state excise taxes;
- assist the Department of Revenue Services in the collection of Sales and Use Taxes, in excess of \$114 Million Dollars annually;
- provide in excess of 1,400 direct jobs to Connecticut residents; and
- contribute in excess of \$150 million dollars in direct and indirect benefits to the state's economy.

The members of the WSWC are committed to ensuring that the best possible safeguards to prevent the sale of beverage alcohol to minors are in place and adults of legal drinking age consume beverage alcohol responsibly, while at the same time providing an efficient method of distribution which provides access to a wide variety of quality wine and spirits from all over the world.

Respectfully submitted



Peter A. Berdon,
Executive Director/General Counsel