



# CONNECTICUT POLICE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

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Testimony to the Committee on General Law  
February 8, 2011

**Chiefs James Strillacci and Anthony Salvatore, Connecticut Police Chiefs Association**

Senator Doyle, Representative Taborsak, and members of the General Law Committee, we are speaking on behalf of the Connecticut Police Chiefs Association (CPCA), which represents all municipal police department in Connecticut as well as police departments at private and state universities. Among other duties, these police departments enforce liquor laws and investigate crimes associated with alcohol abuse.

Two bills would require police approval of liquor permits. **SB 458, AAC Municipal Police Departments and Alcoholic Liquor Permits**, applies to renewals, and **HB 5739, AAC Municipal Approval of Alcoholic Liquor Permits**, to new and renewed permits. We support the concept.

Currently, a new bar or restaurant serving liquor needs local zoning, building, and fire department approval, but law enforcement has no say in issuance of its liquor permit.

But when the permit premises serves drunks or minors, sends its clientele out to drive drunk, litter, urinate on lawns, or otherwise disturb the neighborhood, it's our dispatchers who get the calls at 2 A.M., and the chiefs who get the complaints in the morning.

The ability to review permit applications will allow us a chance to avert quality-of-life problems. The authority to deny renewal to a nuisance location will let us nip problems in the bud.

We oppose **HB 5229, An Act Authorizing Sale of Alcoholic Liquor on Sunday**. The best argument for this bill is that it *may* increase tax revenues. But increased revenue requires more liquor sales and more drinking, which we believe is detrimental to public safety. Thankfully, the increased sales are not a certainty.

It is a certainty that allowing Sunday sales of alcohol at grocery and package stores will increase the workloads of police departments. Retail liquor outlets need police attention to prevent after-hours sale and sales to minors or to drunks, as well as retail crimes like robbery and shoplifting. It will cost police agencies additional, unbudgeted funds to allot extra officers to patrol these sales locations on an additional day.

Further, Sunday sales will make more alcohol available to minors. Sundays are non-school days, when more kids are available to work in grocery stores and pass beer to their peers, to hang around package stores looking for a cooperative adult, to try out their phony ID cards.

The same objections apply to **SB 864, AAC Grocery Store Beer Permits**, which would allow convenience stores to sell beer. In addition, convenience stores are more likely to employ minors than package stores, have fewer supervisors than grocery stores, tend to be open longer hours and are far more numerous than either.

Were this bill to pass, hundreds of gas station/snack shop combinations would become beer outlets. Police would have to drastically increase their supervision of these stores or abandon hope of keeping alcohol away from minors.

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To: Members of the General Assembly

The Connecticut Police Chiefs Association (CPCA) represents every municipal police department in Connecticut as well as police departments at private and state universities. Among our other duties, these police departments enforce liquor laws and investigate crimes associated with alcohol abuse.

We are told that some legislators may propose to allow Sunday sales of alcohol at an estimated 3,000 grocery and package stores. Any law which increases availability of alcohol beverages at off-premise stores (grocery and package stores) on Sunday will have a negative impact upon municipal and university police departments. We therefore oppose this expansion.

Retail liquor outlets need police attention to prevent after-hours sales and sales to prohibited persons (e.g., minors or drunks), as well as the usual retail crimes of robbery, shoplifting, and fraud. It will cost police agencies additional, unbudgeted funds to allot extra officers to patrol these sales locations on an additional business day (Sunday).

We also believe that Sunday sales would increase alcohol abuse by minors. It's a "no-school" day, so underage consumers would have all day to attempt illicit liquor purchases. More teens, subject to peer pressure, would be working in grocery stores which sell beer.

Moreover, it is our experience that substance abuse—especially alcohol—is a significant factor in many domestic-violence calls our police departments answer each year, so we are loath to add availability.

We are dismayed that the impetus for Sunday sales is the assumption that tax revenue will increase. This increase will occur only if consumers buy and drink more liquor because stores are open one more day.

First, we think that more drinking is detrimental to public safety. We urge the legislature not to adopt a bad public policy in the hope of a marginal revenue increase.

Second, we think that such hope is illusory. Sunday sales won't pull business from Massachusetts, where lower taxes and fewer permits-per-capita give Bay State outlets a competitive edge. Sunday sales will merely spread six days' business over seven days.

Thank you for your consideration of our opposition to Sunday sales at off-premise beverage locations.

Sincerely,

Chief Anthony Salvatore  
Chief James Strillacci  
Co-Chairs, CPCA Legislative Committee