WSWC

WINE AND SPIRITS WHOLESALERS OF CONNECTICUT, INC.

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TESTIMONY OF
WINE AND SPIRITS WHOLESALERS OF CONNECTICUT

Concerning:

Proposed Senate Bill No. 994 AN ACT CONCERNING THE SALE OF WINE AT FARMERS' MARKETS.

Proposed Bill 994 seeks to increase the locations at which a "Farm Winery" can sell its products by 400%. This bill is identical to Proposed Bill S.B.462 which is currently pending before the General Law Committee. Currently, Farm wineries are limited in to selling directly to consumers either at the winery location or through mail/internet orders. Farm Wineries can also, under current law, sell their wine, either directly or through a wholesaler, to restaurants, cafes, bars, package store and any other retail class of license.

Propose Bill 994 Provides for Unlimited Sales Outlets

Proposed Bill 994 looks to allow farm wineries to sell their wine at unlimited locations during an unlimited number of days. The effect is to provide farm wineries with the ability to sell their wine anywhere.

Harm to Package Stores

This proposal will harm Connecticut's package stores and wholesalers. By increasing Farm Wineries' distribution points by more than 400 times, a Connecticut consumer will be less likely to make their purchase of wine at a package store. The decrease in package store visits by a Connecticut consumer will, in turn, result in lower sales not only of wine but also beer and spirits resulting in less excise tax and sales tax collections.

The farm wineries have never explained to their industry colleagues why they need to sell their product through additional outlets.

Increases Local Law Enforcement Burdens

This proposal will also increase the burden on the local police to ensure that Connecticut's beverage alcohol laws are complied with. This burden will be particularly difficult given the transient nature and lack of set hours of the proposed venue.

The members of the WSWC have worked hard to ensure 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. The Members of the WSWC have expended significant sums to educate and train wait staff and bartenders in the safe and proper service of beverage alcohol, through the TIPS program and have trained more than 1,500 people over the past three years. The WSWC has sponsored and is currently sponsoring a public service announcement contest for Connecticut's college students to write file and produce a PSA to address the issues of underage drinking and has purchased air time for the winning PSA.

This proposal, takes away from one segment of the industry for the betterment of another segment and at the same time increases the opportunities for young people to gain access to alcohol.

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