

Palmer, Steve

From: Chuck Everett [cpeverett@comcast.net]
Sent: Monday, February 27, 2012 12:46 PM
To: generallawmail
Cc: Teri Everett; Brad Height; eileen.daily@senatedems.ct.gov; Rep. Miller, Philip; Sen. Daily, Eileen
Subject: Gov's bill #5021 - Liquor sales

Dear Sir,

There are many things about the proposed liquor legislation that I could go on about, but let me try keep this short.

My wife and I own two small package stores in Higganum (Haddam), one of which we moved into a building we bought last summer. The building had been sitting vacant for 3 years, and we mortgaged our house to buy and refurbish it. The store is roughly 8 miles from the Stop & Shop in south Middletown, and if this law goes through we will ultimately close the store, file bankruptcy, and Higganum will again be stuck with a vacant eyesore in the center of town. Is this really what the legislature is hoping to accomplish? Because this (and many more like it around the state) will be the result. Allowing us to sell pretzels will NOT compensate for the loss of business when the big box stores buy product at pallet quantity discounts and start advertising 'loss leaders' in their weekly newspaper inserts.

Something to consider - At the end of the year my wife and I look at how the stores did. If we've had a good year and have money left after all the bills are paid, we may buy season tickets to the Bushnell Broadway series, or replace her 8 year old car, or get the builder down the street to remodel our kitchen (Charlie's been pushing us to let him do it for several years...). The bottom line is that our profits (when there are any) STAY IN CONNECTICUT! Big box profits go to corporate headquarters and ultimately into stockholder dividends... How does this benefit Connecticut?

Right now DCP does compliance checks (i.e. sale to minors "stings") on retail stores approximately once a year, and the results are published periodically. A review of the violations will show that, while package stores sell the vast majority of the liquor, the majority of the violations by "off premise" establishments comes from retailers other than package stores (markets, grocery stores, etc.). Package store employees (at least ours) have been to formal classes and have been properly trained to deal with minors, intoxicated individuals, out of state 'proof of age' identification, and the many issues that potentially complicate the sale of alcohol. If the sale of alcoholic beverages is expanded to include the large number of convenience stores in state how many 17, 18, and 19 year olds will be behind the counters selling product to their friends? With DCP's current manning levels, they barely get in one inspection a year based on the current number of establishments - how will they deal with the additional number of retail establishments under the new system?

Finally, Sunday sales... Not really a huge issue, but not the boon the wholesalers have been leading the legislature to believe. I have personally sat in the parking lot across from a liquor store in Sturbridge for an hour (roughly 5:30 - 6:30pm) on a weekday and watched the customers come and go. Better than one third of the vehicles had Connecticut plates, and this was during normal business hours for CT package stores. The motivation to shop Mass is 'price', not 'hours of operation'. To compound the problem, last summer CT raised the 'sin tax' on alcoholic products and the sales tax, while Mass did away with their sales tax on alcohol. The sales tax alone gives Mass a 6.35% price advantage! People living in the border towns will continue to drive to the 'next town over' regardless of the hours CT stores are open as long as there is a significant price disparity.

In summary, this is a bad piece of legislation. It will do to the 'mom & pop' package store industry what Wallgreens, CVS, and Stop & Shop have done to the local 'mom & pop' pharmacies, what the super chains stores have done to the 'mom & pop' local groceries, and what Lowes and Home Depot have done to the 'mom & pop' hardware stores. The basic infrastructure of the small rural towns is giving way to megabox chain stores, and local fiscal control is being ceded to multinational corporate conglomerates. This legislation will not solve the 'cross border sales' issue. This legislation will create a nightmare for DCP compliance checks. This legislation needs to be seriously vetted in committee, and then rejected - for the good of Connecticut.

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