“Modernization” Misnomer in Massachusetts

A public health professional’s experience of fighting to be heard in Massachusetts’ efforts to “modernize” alcohol laws

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As required by the Alcohol Policy 18 Conference, I/we have signed a disclosure statement and note the following conflict(s) of interest:

NONE
What we’ll cover

- How it all began (?)
- Share experience serving on MA Statewide Alcohol Task Force working group
- Task Force’s report release and where we are now
- Lessons Learned
Massachusetts Substance Use Environment

Marijuana
Treasurer proposes legislative fix to Nashoba Valley Winery license confusion

By Dan Adams

GLOBE STAFF JUNE 28, 2016

In an effort to end a controversy that has put a spotlight on the state’s unwieldy liquor laws, Treasurer Deborah Goldberg has drafted legislation that would allow the popular Nashoba Valley Winery to continue serving its own wine, beer, and spirits at a restaurant it runs on its Bolton farm.

The proposed bill would explicitly permit the state’s dozens of “farmer-wineries” to simultaneously hold two state liquor licenses: one permitting the production and pouring of drinks on their farms, and another to serve drinks at an on-site restaurant. The restaurants would be barred from serving alcohol made elsewhere, however.

‘Everything is on the table’ in sweeping review of state alcohol rules

By Dan Adams | GLOBE STAFF JANUARY 18, 2017

Massachusetts Treasurer Deborah Goldberg is throwing open the doors to the most extensive rethinking of how the state regulates alcohol since the end of Prohibition, directing a new task force to create a more cohesive set of rules that “deals with the 21st century.”

Treasurer seeks overhaul of ‘unwieldy’ Mass. alcohol laws

No limits on review of liquor laws

Goldberg wants plan that ‘deals with 21st century’

By Dan Adams

GLOBE STAFF

Massachusetts Treasurer Deborah Goldberg is throwing open the doors to the most extensive rethinking of how the state regulates alcohol since the end of Prohibition, directing a new task force to create a more cohesive set of rules that “deals with the 21st century.”
September 15, 2016

Dr. Monica Bharel
Commissioner
Department of Public Health
250 Washington Street, 6th Floor
Boston, MA 02108

Dear Dr. Bharel,

We are writing to formally request that the Department of Public Health make a strong recommendation to the Office of the State Treasurer regarding participants involved in the anticipated review of Massachusetts’ alcohol laws. Public health experts need to be actively involved in making determinations around alcohol policy.

cc: Governor Charles D. Baker; State Treasurer Deborah B. Goldberg; Senate President Stan Rosenberg; House Speaker Robert DeLeo; State Senator Jason Lewis; Representative Paul Brodeur; Representative Michael Day; Kim S. Gainsboro, Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission Chairman
Timeline

• June 2016: Nashoba Valley Winery sues ABCC
• July 2016: Announcement of overhaul by Treasurer
• Feb 2017: Task Force members named
• May/June 2017: public comment period
• July/Aug 2017: Media picks up on PH pushback
• Aug/Sept 2017: working groups meet
• December 2017: report released
Changes to alcohol rules face pushback

Health advocates oppose loosening sought by business

By Dan Adams
GLOBE STAFF

Advocates see chance to raise tax on alcohol

Study cites surge in heavy drinking

By Felice J. Freyer
GLOBE STAFF
Industry Input

Increase outlet density

Breakdown 3-tier system

Wholesale discounts and coupons

“The suggested change will not impact public health.”
Public Health Expert

Input

- Increase outlet density
- Lower prices
- Increase advertising

Significant impact on public health
Working Groups

• 125 people requested
• 60 chosen*
• 5 working groups chaired by TF members:
  o ABCC Operations
  o Industry Improvements
  o Licensing Process
  o Local Economic Development
  o Public Health and Safety
ABCC Operations

- Industry/Lawyers: 8
- Public Health: 2
- Municipal: 1
- Public Safety: 1

Licensing Process

- Industry/Lawyers: 7
- Public Health: 3
- Municipal: 1
- Other (Food Industry): 1
Local Economic Development

- Industry & Lawyers: 7
- Public Health: 2
- Municipalities: 2
- Other (Food industry): 1
Joy to the World
Task force wants relaxed alcohol laws, higher taxes

The good news

• Restrict wholesale discounts
• There IS an excise tax recommendation
• $ for ABCC enforcement

The bad news

• No cap on licenses; unlimited licenses for grocery stores
• The excise tax recommendation is minimal
• Erosion of 3-tier system
• Allow out of state id provision
Lessons Learned
Always
Take
Notes
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