

NEWS RELEASE



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LEGISLATORS HEAR BILL TO ALLOW BEER, WINE, AND MINNESOTA DISTILLED SPIRIT SALES IN MINNESOTA GROCERY AND CONVENIENCE STORES

ST. PAUL, Minn. – Senator Karin Housley (R – St. Mary’s Points) and Representative Jim Nash (R – Waconia) presented legislation to modernize Minnesota’s antiquated liquor laws this week. The bill allows consumers to buy full-strength beer, wine and Minnesota distilled spirits at food retailers, which includes grocery, coops and convenience stores.

“Minnesota is a huge outlier when it comes to off-sale liquor sales. Consumers don’t understand why they can buy liquor at grocery and convenience stores in most states across the country, including all states that border Minnesota, yet they can’t do it here,” said Sen. Housley, lead author of the bill in the Minnesota Senate. “I believe it’s time we have the conversation about modernizing Minnesota’s liquor laws that will give Minnesotans the convenience, choice and lower prices that consumers in other states have enjoyed for years.”

According to the Food Marketing Institute, 44 states permit the sale full strength beer in grocery stores, 39 states permit wine sales in grocery stores, and 22 states permit the sale of spirits in grocery stores. All states bordering Minnesota allow beer, wine and spirits for sale at grocery and convenience stores. Convenience stores have similar statistics. Currently, Minnesota allows grocery and convenience stores to sell 3.2 beer. It is notable that Minnesota and Utah are the only states that still restrict grocery and convenience stores to 3.2 beer.

There has been significant growth in alcohol manufacturing in Minnesota according to 2017 license history from the Department of Public Safety Alcohol and Gambling Enforcement Division. In 2017, Minnesota had 79 Minnesota farm wineries – up 70% since 2011, 144 breweries – up 650% since 2011, and 29 micro distilleries – Minnesota had zero in 2011.

“Minnesotans have been asking to modernize the marketplace to ensure laws are reactive and responsive to their shopping desires. It’s time to change our 80-year-old liquor laws and support a free marketplace that meets the needs of the 21st century consumer,” said Rep. Nash, the lead author of the bill in the Minnesota House of Representatives. “Anyone who has traveled across the country knows that competition is good for consumers. Minnesota has experienced an explosion of growth with craft

breweries, farm wineries, and micro distilleries. Providing opportunities to highlight their products and cross merchandise with local food products creates exciting partnerships to grow our local economy.”

“Online shopping is drastically altering the traditional marketplace. Brick and mortar Minnesota businesses need the opportunity to create shopping experiences that engages the customer in an engaging atmosphere,” said Jamie Pfuhl, President of the Minnesota Marketplace Alcohol Alliance. “Unique and innovative partnerships will allow for a space where main street businesses can thrive, meeting the expectations of their customers.”

Consumer support for modernizing Minnesota liquor laws and allowing the sale of beer, wine and Minnesota distilled spirits at grocery and convenience stores is strong. An independent, scientific study conducted by SurveyUSA in April 2018 showed that Minnesotans support change in liquor laws for grocery and convenience stores by a margin of 76 percent to 18 percent. Regardless of political party, income level, gender or region, support is greater than a 4-to-1 margin.

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