

Testimony of LeAnn Supeck, Secretary, Malt Beverage Distributors Association

September 8, 2014

Chairman Greenleaf, Chairman Rafferty and members of the Senate Judiciary and Transportation Committees:

My name is LeAnn Supeck. I am present here as someone who has grown up in the beer business and who now works in that business. I am a soccer mom and a resident of the Lampeter-Strasburg School District. I am also proud to say I served with the U.S. Marines and am here as secretary of the Malt Beverage Distributors Association. As I must strike the balance in a busy life with young children, husband and a career, I strongly applaud your effort to reduce alcohol-impaired driving.

Today the American soccer mom and her children spend a lot of time on our highways. You are on an important mission of making our roads safer. I am sure these hearings will generate many viable suggestions, and, as someone familiar with the retail sale of alcoholic beverages, we urge you to carefully implement them.

In Pennsylvania, our General Assembly carefully crafted a system that was intended to strike the balance between alcohol availability, consumption, and control. As a result, they made the beer distributor who sold in larger quantities the primary seller for off-premises consumption. We are limited to one outlet per person, and thus designed to be a small business. We are regulated by the Liquor Control Board as to our assortment of products. The policy makers allowed the tavern or restaurant – which was the primary venue for on-premises consumption, to sell a single six pack to go, thus attempting to eliminate “one for the road”. About 30 years ago, that was expanded to a 12-pack.

Under their plan, all sellers of alcoholic beverages were intended to be specialty retailers, meaning that it was to be our primary product. We must focus on this product, its impact, and remain committed to its proper distributions since we know that with every sale if we lose our license, we can lose our livelihood.

It has long been accepted as solid public policy in Pennsylvania that increased access to alcohol is not a social good. The people who study this refer to “outlet density” and compare it to “excessive alcohol consumption.”

Here is what the US Centers for Disease Control wrote in reference to this as a health problem:

"On the basis of the reviewed evidence, the Community Preventive Services Task Force found sufficient evidence of a positive association between outlet density and excessive alcohol consumption and related harms to recommend limiting alcohol outlet density through the use of regulatory authority (e.g., licensing and zoning) as a means of reducing or controlling excessive alcohol consumption and related harms."

In other words, unrestrained access to alcoholic beverages is not a good thing. I mentioned that I am a former U.S. Marine. In order to confront and deal with problems surrounding excessive alcohol consumption, our U.S. Navy has recently taken serious, well-publicized steps to reduce density and access by eliminating alcoholic beverages from their convenience outlets and reducing hours of sale from their other stores. Here is what the Department of the Navy said about the change:

"Prior to making these changes, the Navy analyzed reports of criminal misconduct, particularly sexual assault, and safety incidents throughout the Fleet....As a result of our findings...the Chief of Naval Operations directed several alcohol marketing actions designed to deglamorize alcohol and limit its accessibility...."

We believe the system as it has traditionally existed in Pennsylvania allowing sales by specialty retailers and not mass market retailers, gets it right.

We are adult oriented businesses, meaning that people under the age of 21 are not even comfortable coming into our stores. Mass market stores are intended to attract and generate a great deal of consumer traffic in all age groups. They create a target for those who want to steal beer. Newspaper reporters have commented on the problem arising from the modern day "beer run", a plague on convenience stores where alcohol is sold. In Washington State two legislators this year introduced and had passed a bill to deal with the substantial thefts of alcohol from grocery stores. These thefts were reported by one store owner to be at the rate of \$800 to \$1,000 per month. Many grocers there now lock up their alcohol, requiring the customers to ask the sales clerk for access.

In Europe, these problems are generating headlines; including the adoption in France of what we believe is the Pennsylvania rule, namely that alcohol and gasoline should not be sold from the same place, property or location. The Liquor Control Board has been trying to emasculate our rule, and we are in court now. Clearly, if DUI is a problem, having high traffic locations that sell gasoline to motorists is not a way to resolve it. Or, to put it another way, requiring new teenage drivers or those of our fellow citizens with addiction problems to confront alcohol's glamorization, sale, and use every time they must stop for gasoline, is not wise.

I have attached an article from *Bloomberg Businessweek* date July 10, 2014. It notes that Family Dollar wants to sell alcoholic beverages, saying the "company announced the accelerated alcohol strategy on Thursday morning after reporting another weak quarter." Everybody wants to sell alcoholic beverages: grocery stores, convenience stores, pharmacies, dollar stores and, of course, Wal-Mart. More outlets will not improve prices and are guaranteed to substantially reduce selection and provide more opportunities for those who should not be buying alcoholic beverages to gain access.

This, senators, is my message. If you want to help then we would suggest that policy makers follow the solid, time-proven advice of those who rely on science and that you conclude that greater access to alcohol is not a good thing. We suggest you maintain the wisdom of the past by keeping alcoholic beverages out of gasoline outlets and other mass market stores.

We believe that the best enforcement starts with regulated specialty retailers with adult-oriented stores – men and women who know that if they lose their license they will lose their livelihood. These are small businesses which are not selling thousands of other products and who cannot use alcoholic beverages as any form of loss leader. We ask you to have your package of bills to deal with this problem include the following:

- The elimination of the interior connection, except as originally intended, bowling alleys;
- A re-confirmation that alcohol and gasoline should not be sold from the same place, property or location.

We wish you great success in your effort to make our Commonwealth a safer place.

Recommendations for Reducing Excessive Alcohol Consumption and Alcohol-Related Harms by Limiting Alcohol Outlet Density

The Task Force on Community Preventive Services

The serious toll that alcohol imposes on the population of the U.S. led the Task Force on Community Preventive Services (Task Force) to include the reduction of excessive alcohol consumption and related harms as a priority topic in its earliest planning sessions.¹ As the third-leading cause of preventable death in the nation,² excessive use of alcohol is a public health challenge that can be approached from many directions. The Task Force first studied and made recommendations on several ways to reduce alcohol-impaired driving.³⁻⁷ It next assessed ways to reduce excessive alcohol consumption,⁸ exploring the effectiveness of interventions to maintain limits on the days on which alcohol can be sold (recommended); increase taxes on alcoholic beverages (recommended); limit privatization of alcohol sales (insufficient evidence to determine effectiveness); enhance enforcement of laws prohibiting sales to minors (recommended); and regulate alcohol outlet density, reviewed in the accompanying article.⁹

Intervention Recommendation

On the basis of the reviewed evidence, the Task Force found sufficient evidence of a positive association between outlet density and excessive alcohol consumption and related harms to recommend limiting alcohol outlet density through the use of regulatory authority (e.g., licensing and zoning) as a means of reducing or controlling excessive alcohol consumption and related harms.

A diverse group of studies of the association of outlet density with alcohol consumption and related harms indicates that when the density of on- or off-premises alcohol outlets is high or increases, the level of alcohol consumption is correspondingly high or increases, and excessive consumption and its diverse related harms occur. A smaller number of studies indicates the converse association. The validity of the causal link between outlet density and excessive alcohol consumption and its related harms is further supported by evidence from evaluations of related interventions that affect outlet density (e.g., bans or privatization of alcohol sales). On the basis of this evidence, the Task Force concludes that limiting on- and off-premises alcoholic beverage outlet density—either by reducing current density levels or limiting density growth—can be an effective means of

reducing the harms associated with excessive alcohol consumption. It may also provide additional benefits for quality of life by reducing community problems such as loitering, public disturbances, and vandalism.

Information from Other Advisory Groups Healthy People 2010 goals and objectives

The intervention reviewed here may be useful in reaching objectives specified in *Healthy People 2010*,¹⁰ the disease prevention and health promotion agenda for the U.S. The objectives most directly relevant to this review are those to reduce excessive alcohol consumption (26-11 and 26-12); reduce average annual alcohol consumption (26-12); and reduce key adverse consequences of excessive alcohol consumption (26-1, 26-2, and 26-5 through 26-8). *Healthy People 2010* also notes that excessive alcohol consumption is related to several other public health priorities, including cancer, educational achievement, injuries, risky sexual activity, and mental health.

Surgeon General's Workshop on Drunk Driving

This workshop, held in 1988, was a multi-agency effort to address the problem of drunk driving. Recommendations were made in several areas. To reduce availability of alcoholic beverages, workshop participants included a recommendation to strengthen laws concerning hours of sale, characteristics and density of outlets, and other factors relating to retail availability of alcoholic beverages.¹¹ The workshop also recommended future research to document the contribution of location, density, and hours of sale of alcohol outlets to alcohol-impaired driving and resulting injuries and fatalities.

Interpreting and Using the Recommendation

This recommendation can be used to support efforts by community-based and grassroots organizations to limit the density of alcohol outlets in their communities. State and local officials can use this recommendation to help enact or reform laws concerning density of outlets where alcohol is available.

Implementers may encounter barriers, including preemption laws at higher levels of government (a state law that takes precedence over and thus allows what a local law is trying to restrict) and opposition by groups whose commercial interests may be affected.

The names and affiliations of the Task Force members are listed below and at www.thecommunityguide.org.

Task Force on Community Preventive Services Members (June 2009)

Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, MBA (Chair)
Director of Public Health and Health Officer
County of Los Angeles
Department of Health
Los Angeles CA

Barbara K. Rimer, DrPH, MPH (Vice-Chair)
Dean, School of Public Health
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Chapel Hill NC

Ana Abraido-Lanza, PhD
Associate Professor, Department of Sociomedical Sciences
Mailman School of Public Health
Columbia University
New York NY

Ned Calonge, MD, PhD
Chief Medical Officer
Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
Denver CO

John M. Clymer, Vice President and Health Science Officer
Senior Advisor
Alliance of the Healthiest Nation and Association of
Directors of Health Promotion and Education
Burke VA

Karen Glanz, PhD, MPH
Professor of Behavioral Sciences and Health Education
Georgia Cancer Coalition Distinguished Research Scholar
Director, Emory Prevention Research Center
Rollins School of Public Health
Emory University
Atlanta GA

Ron Z. Goetzel, PhD
Research Professor and Director
Institute of Health and Productivity Studies
Rollins School of Public Health
Emory University
Vice President, Consulting and Applied Research
Thomson Healthcare
Washington DC

Larry Green, DrPH
Adjunct Professor, Epidemiology and Biostatistics
School of Medicine and Comprehensive Cancer Center
University of California at San Francisco
San Francisco CA

Robert L. Johnson, MD
The Sharon and Joseph L. Muscarelle Endowed
Interim Dean,
Professor of Pediatrics and Psychiatry,
Director, Division of Adolescent and Young Adult Medicine
UMDNJ—New Jersey Medical School
Department of Pediatrics
Newark NJ

C. Tracy Orleans, PhD
Distinguished Fellow and Senior Scientist
Department of Research and Evaluation
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Princeton NJ

Nico P. Pronk, PhD
JourneyWell
Senior Research Investigator, HealthPartners Research Foundation
Bloomington MN

Gilbert Ramirez, DrPH
Associate Dean—Academic and Student Affairs
Robert Stempel College of Public Health and Social Work
Florida International University
Miami FL

No financial disclosures were reported by the authors of this paper.

References

1. Zaza S, Lawrence RS, Mahan CS, et al. Scope and organization of the Guide to Community Preventive Services. *Am J Prev Med* 2000;18(1S):27–34.
2. CDC. Alcohol-attributable deaths and years of potential life lost—United States, 2001. *MMWR Morb Mort Wkly Rep* 2004;53(37):866–70.
3. Ditter SM, Elder RA, Shults RA, et al. Effectiveness of designated driver programs for reducing alcohol-impaired driving: a systematic review. *Am J Prev Med* 2005;28(5S):280–7.
4. Elder RA, Shults RA, Sleet DA, et al. Effectiveness of mass media campaigns for reducing drinking and driving and alcohol-involved crashes: a systematic review. *Am J Prev Med* 2004;27(1):57–65.
5. Elder RA, Nichols JL, Shults RA, Sleet DA, Barrios LC. Effectiveness of school-based programs for reducing drinking and driving and riding with drinking drivers: a systematic review. *Am J Prev Med* 2005;28(5S):288–304.
6. Task Force on Community Preventive Services. Recommendation for use of mass media campaigns to reduce alcohol-impaired driving. *Am J Prev Med* 2004;27(1):66.
7. Zaza S, Thompson RS, eds. The Guide to Community Preventive Services. Reducing injuries to motor vehicle occupants. Systematic reviews of evidence, recommendations from the Task Force on Community Preventive Services, and expert commentary. *Am J Prev Med* 2001;21(1S):1–90.
8. Preventing excessive alcohol use. www.thecommunityguide.org/alcohol/index.html. 2009.
9. Campbell AC, Hahn RA, Elder RA, et al. The effectiveness of limiting alcohol outlet density as a means of reducing excessive alcohol consumption and alcohol-related harms. *Am J Prev Med* 2009;37(6):556–69.
10. USDHHS. Healthy People 2010; www.healthypeople.gov/.
11. Office of the Surgeon General. Surgeon General's Workshop on Drunk Driving: proceedings. profiles.nlm.nih.gov/NN/B/B/B/W/.

The News Tribune

[Previous Story](#)

[Next Story](#)

Teen shoplifting, easily accessible liquor a bad mix

Since passage of I-1183, would-be thieves can find booze across aisle from soda, corn chips

By JEREMY PAWLOSKI

jpawloski@theolympian.com December 9, 2012

[Facebook](#)[Twitter](#)[Google Plus](#)[Reddit](#)[E-mail](#)[Print](#)

- **Police reports on 12 teen cases**

Through a public-records request with Thurston County Superior Court, The Olympian has identified 13 teenagers as being charged in Thurston County on suspicion of liquor theft from grocery stores since Initiative 1183 took effect in June.

Juvenile prosecutor Wayne Graham said Friday that since The Olympian's request, he has filed minor-in-possession charges against another seven teens accused of stealing spirits from local retailers and grocery stores.

The Olympian asked for information on juveniles accused of both being a minor in possession of alcohol and third-degree theft. All the teens whose cases were identified were accused of stealing liquor from grocery stores or "big box" retailers that sell spirits.

The 13 cases identified through the public-records request do not include those involving adults 18 to 20.

They also do not include the "handful" of shoplifting cases where a teen was charged only with being a minor in possession of liquor, typically when a teen has been caught shoplifting liquor but has not yet left the store, Graham said.

From the 13 cases identified through the public records request, The Olympian obtained police reports from local jurisdictions showing at least 12 cases of liquor theft by underage shoplifters since I-1183 passed.

Not every teen who was arrested as a result of the incidents was criminally charged.

Here is a breakdown of the incidents involving cases that led to criminal charges being filed against the 13 teens.

Olympia

- June 13: A 16-year-old and a 17-year-old were arrested for allegedly stealing a bottle of whiskey at the Safeway on Martin Way.
- June 20: A 17-year-old was caught trying to steal a bottle of vodka from Ralph's Thriftway.
- July 11: Four teens, who "looked between 12 to 15 years of age," stole a bottle of rum from Top Food and Drug on Cooper Point Road, police said.

- Sept. 28: A 15-year-old was caught trying to shoplift a bottle of liqueur at the Bayview Thriftway downtown.
- Oct. 11: A 15-year-old was arrested for allegedly stealing liquor from a Safeway in Olympia.

Lacey

- Aug. 10: Two teens were arrested for allegedly stealing a bottle of vodka from the Rite-Aid outlet on Sleater-Kinney Road. When arrested, the teens were carrying bottles of brandy and whisky stolen from another location, police said.
- Aug. 30: A teen allegedly stole a bottle of vodka from the Safeway on Yelm Highway.
- Sept. 22: A 16-year-old was arrested for allegedly trying to steal liquor from the Walmart on Galaxy Drive.

Yelm

- June 29: Two 16-year-olds were arrested for allegedly stealing a bottle of vodka from the Safeway on East Yelm Avenue. One was charged.
- Aug 2: An 18-year-old was arrested allegedly for stealing two bottles of liquor from the Safeway on Yelm Highway.
- Aug. 20: A 16-year-old was arrested for allegedly stealing two bottles of rum from the WalMart on state Route 507.

Tumwater

- Nov. 10: A 16-year-old was arrested for allegedly trying to steal liquor from the Safeway on Cleveland Avenue.

Since private stores started selling hard liquor in June, at least 20 teenagers have been charged with stealing spirits from Thurston County grocery stores, a number juvenile prosecutor Wayne Graham calls only "the tip of the iceberg" and an indication of a larger problem.

After passage of Initiative 1183 — which eliminated state-run liquor stores and allowed private liquor sales across Washington — local chains and big-box retailers have made liquor too accessible to would-be juvenile shoplifters, Graham said.

"Alcohol use by students on school property has gone up, and it's not beer," the prosecutor said.

"Obviously our focus is on kids not having access to unlawful substances. We don't think stores are taking any steps to minimize the access that juveniles have to alcohol, primarily, through theft."

Graham said he cannot recall a single case involving a minor accused of shoplifting beer or wine since the new law authorizing liquor sales at grocery stores went into effect on June 1.

Several Capital High School students agreed with Graham's assessment that teens are taking advantage of it being easier to shoplift liquor.

"You're not an automatic suspect when you walk in a grocery store," said one student interviewed Tuesday in the school parking lot.

Another student admitted he's on probation after he was caught stealing liquor from a downtown grocery store. The teen said he took the liquor to sell to other students — not to drink it himself.

"I know kids who are doing it," he said of shoplifting liquor. "It's easy."

Retailers asked by The Olympian about the problem of liquor thefts by minors either did not respond or said they were working on ways to minimize shoplifting.

As for the size of the problem, the Washington State Organized Retail Crime Alliance indicated about \$18,000 to \$20,000 in liquor thefts — by adults as well as by minors — took place from mid-September to the end of October, according to the state Liquor Control Board's enforcement and education chief, Justin Nordhorn.

Officials at the alliance could not be reached for comment.

The Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs recently sent a letter to the Liquor Control Board, asking it to require retailers to keep track of and report liquor thefts. The association said the sale of spirits by retailers "is resulting in increased access to alcohol by youth under 21 years of age."

The police reports and criminal charges generated by teens stealing liquor understate the scope of the problem, said Graham and others.

"We're only catching a small percent of what's happening," Graham said. "We are not getting all of the alcohol-related incidents referred for criminal charges."

Local police, youth advocates and school officials agreed with Graham's criticisms.

"We have definitely seen an increase of thefts of hard alcohol from the stores, especially by juveniles," Tumwater police detective Jen Kolb said, "more than likely because hard liquor was not made readily available to juveniles prior to the passing of the new law."

"Additionally," Kolb said, "we have noted an increase in alcohol-related reports by the schools, and this has become a proliferating problem that needs to be addressed."

The number of alcohol-related incidents routed to the juvenile prosecutor's office has gone up in the three largest Thurston County school districts — North Thurston, Olympia and Tumwater — since liquor privatization, Graham said.

But school officials in Tumwater and Olympia said they had not noticed a marked increase in alcohol-related incidents involving students since June 1.

North Thurston School District officials said they have taken steps to deal with the problem, including speaking with managers of the Safeway store on Martin Way near North Thurston High School, spokeswoman Courtney Schrieve said.

"Our main concern is for the health and safety of the kids," she said.

Olympia Police Chief Ronnie Roberts said he recently spoke during a Senate work session about the public safety issues raised by liquor thefts at retailers, including by teens.

"Law enforcement continues to feel the impact of the privatization of liquor in our state," he said. "At a time when we are strained by a lack of resources, we are faced with addressing another community issue that is not directly supported by revenue at the state level."

"Most concerning is the risk to our youth who now have even greater access to hard alcohol replacing consumption of lower alcoholic beverages like beer."

FIGHTING CRIME

In an email to The Olympian, Safeway public affairs director Sara Osborne said the company is working on the problem of minors stealing from its store near North Thurston High School.

School officials and police have said they are concerned that the store's liquor is sold in the same aisle as soft drinks and energy drinks where students congregate.

Phone calls to Safeway's corporate office asking for general comments about liquor thefts by minors went unreturned.

"There is not a lot we want to say on record because of the security sensitivity of the issue," she wrote, "but please know that we have a meeting scheduled very soon with Olympia police, Lacey police, our loss-prevention director and the store manager to discuss the situation and our potential tools to prevent this type of occurrence in the future."

Lacey police Lt. Phil Comstock said the department has been in contact with Safeway's managers, and they have been working to ease the school district's concerns about liquor being sold on shelves close to energy and soft drinks.

"They want to do everything they can to prevent theft and access to underage people," Comstock said.

Calls to the corporate offices of Fred Meyer and Top Food & Drug requesting comments on whether liquor privatization has increased teen shoplifting of spirits at their stores went unreturned.

But Joel Benoliel, senior vice president of Costco, the Kirkland-based chain that helped bankroll the initiative that took alcohol out of state control, said the argument that more teens will have access to liquor because of privatization is "specious."

"Teenagers have always had access to alcohol," he said, pointing out that about 30 states allow grocery stores and retailers to sell spirits.

Though even one teen stealing liquor is too many, the number of youths doing it because of privatization is "statistically insignificant," Benoliel said.

However, a police report from a liquor theft case in Olympia suggests privatization has resulted in more alcohol consumption at local high schools.

The June 13 report details the arrests of a 16-year-old and a 17-year-old accused of stealing a bottle of whiskey at the Martin Way Safeway. In the report, manager David Kipp tells an Olympia police officer the teens told him the problem is widespread.

"The boys told him (the manager) that 'everyone' at North Thurston High School is stealing liquor from Safeway," the report states. The manager said one of the teens "told him it was his intention to sell this liquor to other kids from the school."

A police officer could smell liquor on one of the teens, who told the officer he had been drinking before school with seven or eight other students in the school's south parking lot, the report states. Both teens also told the officer "they realized it was wrong to steal, but many of the students have been stealing alcohol from the store because it is easy to do so," according to the report.

ON THE SHELVES

The issue of access is of paramount concern for Graham and others.

Stores typically keep cigarettes behind a glass case on a shelf behind a cashier, "but if you want to buy a bottle of tequila, it's right across the aisle from the Doritos," Graham said.

Some outlets place plastic locks on top of liquor caps, but they can easily be defeated with a screwdriver, he noted.

At the Martin Way Safeway, liquor and single-serving energy drinks and sodas recently were stocked in adjacent aisles. School-age children traveling in groups and wearing backpacks were lined up in the aisle, grabbing energy drinks. Surveillance cameras kept an eye on the area where liquor was sold.

The school district has asked the store's managers not to stock liquor near the energy drinks, but Safeway's corporate office has yet to respond to the district, Schrieve said.

To help deter teen shoplifting of liquor, with Safeway's permission, the school district has brought in security staff members to patrol the store, Schrieve said. That seems to "have made a difference," she said.

Another idea, Graham suggested, is having stores sell liquor in a separate area, with a single entrance and exit so that employees could more easily monitor who belongs there and who doesn't.

Kevin Stormans, owner of Ralph's Thriftway and Bayview Thriftway in downtown Olympia, said he has no data indicating a significant increase in teens stealing liquor since I-1183 passed.

But, he added, "I don't want to create easier access for minors or any other shoplifters." He said he is experimenting with ways to deter liquor thefts.

At Bayview Thriftway, for example, customers wanting to buy liquor must enter through a single access point, near the cash registers, so cashiers can keep an eye on who is there.

He said he's considering requiring customers intending to buy liquor to leave it with cashiers and then continue with their shopping for other items.

At both of his stores, surveillance cameras are placed in the areas where liquor is sold, he added.

Stormans said he would oppose any requirement that grocery stores place liquor in separate areas away from other food items. Big chains could afford to do that, he said, but small, locally owned stores such as his would be at a competitive disadvantage. He said he looked at selling liquor at a separate area at Ralph's Thriftway but that it was too expensive.

At Costco, Benoliel said, shoplifting of liquor is not an issue because most of the store's members are at least 18, plus employees check customers' receipts as they leave the store.

The state Liquor Control Board is not working on rules that would require grocery stores to make liquor less accessible to minors, spokesman Brian Smith said.

THE STORES' RESPONSIBILITIES

Local stores benefiting from legalization of private liquor sales have a responsibility to the community to keep liquor out of the hands of minors, Graham said.

"They're there to make their money," he said. "The state gave them the ability to make their money with no real limit in how they're going to make their money with alcohol sales."

The public health issues that likely would result from liquor being more readily available to underage shoplifters was among the reasons some groups opposed I-1183, said Jim Cooper, executive director of Together, a local organization that fights teen violence and substance abuse.

"The stores have a responsibility to do what they can," said Cooper, an Olympia city councilman and a board member of the Washington Association for Substance Abuse and Violence Prevention. Given the

money the stores now make from liquor sales, they "certainly can't argue that they don't have the resources" to make liquor less accessible to minors, Cooper said.

Benoliel said he believes opponents of privatization are making an issue of liquor shoplifting by teens because they want to try to repeal the new law.

"You have people who are sore losers and are trying to make a political point," he said.

Graham took issue with Benoliel's comments.

He said it was "patently false" to assert that young people don't have easier access to liquor now that the state-run liquor stores are closed and liquor is available at grocery stores and retail stores across the state.

Jeremy Pawloski: 360-754-5445
jpawloski@theolympian.com

[Facebook](#)[Twitter](#)[Google Plus](#)[Reddit](#)[E-mail](#)[Print](#)

Join The Conversation

The News Tribune is pleased to provide this opportunity to share information, experiences and observations about what's in the news. Some of the comments may be reprinted elsewhere in the site or in the newspaper. We encourage lively, open debate on the issues of the day, and ask that you refrain from profanity, hate speech, personal comments and remarks that are off point. Thank you for taking the time to offer your thoughts.

[Commenting FAQs](#) | [Terms of Service](#)

Today's Circulars



SPORTS AUTHORITY
EXPIRES TOMORROW

[View All Circulars](#)



DOLLAR GENERAL
EXPIRES THIS SUNDAY



PETSMART
VALID UNTIL OCT 05



FAMILY DOLLAR
EXPIRES TOMORROW

New law takes aim at liquor thefts

Effective in June, its goal is to keep minors from obtaining spirits



(http://columbian.media.clients.ellingtoncms.com/img/photos/2014/05/09/0510_met_Liquor_store)

A new liquor law will take effect next month. The measure states that a licensee experiencing an "unacceptable rate of spirits theft," defined as two or more incidents in a six-month period, where an underage drinker ends up possessing the booze, could see their license pulled by the state's liquor control board. (Zachary Kaufman (/staff/zachary-kaufman/)/The Columbian)

[Buy this photo \(/photos/2014/may/09/90763/\)](/photos/2014/may/09/90763/)

By **Lauren Dake**, Columbian political writer

Published: May 9, 2014, 6:43 PM

5

On a Saturday evening in March, a 25-year-old man went into Safeway on Main Street, filled a backpack and shopping cart with 26 full-sized bottles of liquor — Hennessy, vodka, scotch — and left the store without paying.



Two 16-year-old girls later admitted they were in the car, one at the wheel, as the man hit four retail stores that day, according to the Vancouver Police Department.

Next month, a new law will take effect that will give local law enforcement officers more tools to crack down on liquor thefts and with the aim of keeping liquor out of the hands of minors.

The measure, House Bill 2155, states that a licensee experiencing an "unacceptable rate of spirits theft" defined as two or more incidents in a six-month period, where the result is an underage drinker ends up possessing the booze, could see their license pulled by the state's liquor control board.

That means even if the theft doesn't involve a minor, but an underage drinker ends up with the stolen bottle, the retailer could be held responsible.

"If you lose a bottle ... you could lose your liquor license," said Rep. Chris Hurst, a Democratic lawmaker from Enumclaw, who helped spearhead the effort. "This is a huge change. I don't think we'll have to use it a lot. The threat of the law (will) change the behavior."

The threshold may seem low considering in the first four months of this year, the Safeway at 3707 Main St. reported seven instances where spirits were stolen. The Safeway at 13719 S.E. Mill Plain Blvd. reported five different instances. And of course, Safeway isn't alone.

Walgreens at 2521 Main St. reported three different cases in the same four-month time period, according to the Vancouver Police Department. Officers believe the bulk of thefts involved minors.

After voters approved privatizing liquor in 2011, Hurst said, there was a "market change."

"Kids got their hands on beer before, but beer wasn't being shoplifted — wine wasn't (either)," he said. "Spirits changed that."

Hurst, who is a former cop, said he decided to do some of his own investigative work after hearing stories of high rates of liquor thefts.

He visited stores at sporadic hours. He took photos. He called retail managers.

"What really got me was around Thanksgiving and Christmas time, there were stores with Jack Daniels and Jagermeister that were eight steps from the door at 2 and 3 in the morning," he said. "You had to ring a bell to get someone out of the back from stocking. You could have loaded a truckload ... before anyone noticed."

It's not an automatic that stores will lose their licenses, Hurst said. They can show a good-faith effort, he said, by moving liquor away from the door, or behind a glass case.

"The store has an opportunity to respond and say, 'It's not our booze,' but if it turns out it did come from them, they have the opportunity to lock it up so it's not stolen," he said. "And the liquor board can impose that, if they fail to do that, then the liquor board can take their license."

And he's not worried it will deter stores from reporting crimes. Even if they do, he said, the cops "know where the booze is coming from."

"God's sake, you can look it up on Facebook or Twitter ... kids are bragging about it," he said.

Rep. Cathy Dahlquist, a Republican from Enumclaw, who also backed the measure, said the goal is to give more authority to local law enforcement, who can build a case and then report the stores to the state's liquor control board.

"They know where the liquor is walking out of (and) they can direct the liquor control board, 'Go to this Speedy Mart, Safeway or Fred Meyer,'" Dahlquist said. "That's the idea, more private, local control. I think it's pretty common sense."

Retailer's take

Iliia Botvinnik, a public information officer with the Vancouver Police Department, said Safeway has been trying to curb thefts.

Safeway did not return a call seeking comment.

Other stores, Botvinnik said, have been taking active steps to secure liquor, but it's not easy.

"The theft is pretty constant; liquor specifically, it's targeted by juveniles ... and organized retail theft crews. They come in and work the I-5 corridor between here and Seattle," he said.

Several crews, he said, can swipe thousands of dollars of merchandise a day. They can resell them to bars or underage drinkers.

Jan Gee, with the Washington Food Industry Association, which represents independent and locally owned grocery stores, said the responsibility has shifted too much on to retailers.

New law takes aim at liquor thefts | The Columbian

"We didn't support liquor privatization; the public did, and the public wants it, and that means it's a public problem," she said.

"We need everyone involved in the solution. You can't have retailers absorb expensive locked cages on the liquor — that is not the right answer. The right answer is everyone sit down and strengthen the laws and get local law enforcement involved."

Echoing Botvinnik, she said people come in, load up their vans and get the word out to underage drinkers.

"Kids know where to buy liquor. Tell me how in the world a grocery store owner can defend themselves when they have three, four, five organized rings that leave with liquor. How in the world would our store prevent them from selling to minors?" Gee said.



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
COMMANDER, NAVY INSTALLATIONS COMMAND
716 SICARD STREET, SE, SUITE 1000
WASHINGTON NAVY YARD, DC 20374-5140

December 27, 2013

The Honorable Charlie Dent
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Dent:

Thank you for your letter of December 8, 2013, concerning the Navy's recent changes to its alcohol marketing strategy.

Prior to making these changes, the Navy analyzed reports of criminal misconduct, particularly sexual assault, and safety incidents throughout the Fleet. We validated trends of irresponsible alcohol use underlying each of these bad behaviors.

As a result of our findings, and in keeping with the Navy's 21st Century Sailor initiative, the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) directed several alcohol marketing actions designed to de-glamorize alcohol and limit its accessibility onboard our installations. These are just a few of the many actions the Navy has taken to prepare Sailors and their families to handle the mental and emotional rigors of Naval service, and to ensure the safety and security of the Force.

Again, thank you for your inquiry. Please let me know if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

Anne R Davis
Anne Rathmell Davis
Deputy Commander

Enclosure:
CNO letter Ser N00/100056 of 18 Jul 13.

Copy to:
Mr. David J. Brightbill



Reporting and drinking beer in Philly and beyond

Read Joe Sixpack every Friday in the Daily News
Direct from the Best Beer Drinking City in America

The Bar Stool

Beer Fridge

Sixpack Sez

Book Joe

Yo Joe!

Sixpack Sez

March 22, 2012 | Take the beer and run

IN MOST OF AMERICA, "beer run" means darting out to buy beer for the night. It is a common term understood by pretty much everyone. Except in the Southwest.

In the Southwest, "beer run" means heading to the nearest convenience store, grabbing a 30-pack from the cooler and walking out the door without paying.

This is not just some regional quirk of language. It is a bizarre crime phenomenon that happens with astonishing frequency throughout Texas, New Mexico and Arizona.

How frequently? Just plug "beer run" into [YouTube's search engine](#), and you can spend hours watching shoplifters on video - good ol' boys caught on surveillance cameras running or strolling right past the cash register with a 30-pack in each hand.

Anywhere else, beer theft is no more notable than swiping a pack of cigarettes. Police, court officials and store operators in Philadelphia said beer shoplifting was not particularly frequent in the city.

In El Paso, Texas, the police call beer runs "one of our more pressing problems."

Last year, the department reported 2,876 beer runs citywide - a number that is remarkable not only because it works out to eight a day, but because it represents a 17 percent drop from 2010.

It's the same problem throughout the Southwest, where police departments have launched public-information campaigns, created task forces and posted photos of beer-run suspects online.

In Mesa, Ariz., police distribute beer-run-prevention brochures with a handy form for clerks to report thefts. In Glendale, Ariz., where beer runs are described as "chronic," the police teamed with the University of Arizona to produce a [public-service video](#) warning kids not to steal beer.

In Peoria, Ariz., police used a federal grant to conduct Operation Chug-a-Lug, a beer-run crackdown that tallied 67 arrests in less than two months.

"It's pretty basic," said *El Paso Times* reporter Daniel Borunda, who has written about the thefts. "Usually, it's just a man walking into a convenience store, he grabs a beer and walks right past the register."

7-Eleven Inc. declined to comment on how often beer is stolen from its stores, but the company did acknowledge it has a beer-run-prevention policy. Among other things, it locks beer cases after midnight and stacks warm beer away from the front doors.



[Current Column](#)

[Column Archive](#)

[Happy Hour Audio](#)

[Beer Minute Video](#)



Beer runs are a misdemeanor that may result in little more than a fine - assuming the police bother to make an arrest. The Dallas Police Department recently announced it would no longer respond to shoplifting calls involving less than \$50 in merchandise.

Of course, a thief can work up a helluva thirst.

A couple of years ago in Albuquerque, N.M., police arrested a guy who stole nearly 2,000 cans in 16 separate beer runs at the same store over one month. Sometimes beer runs turn violent. Earlier this year, El Paso police shot and wounded a 15-year-old boy during a beer run.



But mainly a beer run is shoplifting. Often it's kids acting on a dare, but judging from the surveillance videos I've watched, it's typically an adult male in his 20s or 30s who should know better.

I spoke with crime experts, court officers and police, and although some said beer runs might be a "local tradition," none could explain how it became so common in the Southwest.

And here's something else they couldn't explain: The preferred choice of beer runners is **Bud** or **Bud Light**. "For whatever reason," Borunda said, "they don't go for the expensive stuff."

-30-



Preventing Excessive Alcohol Consumption: Regulation of Alcohol Outlet Density

Alcohol outlet density regulation is defined as applying regulatory authority to reduce alcoholic beverage outlet density or to limit the increase of alcoholic beverage outlet density. Regulation is often implemented through licensing or zoning processes. An alcohol outlet is a place where alcohol may be legally sold for the buyer to drink there (on-premises outlets, such as bars or restaurants) or elsewhere (off-premises outlets, such as liquor stores). Density refers to the number of alcohol outlets in a given area.

Summary of Task Force Recommendations and Findings

The [Community Preventive Services Task Force](#) ([./about/task-force-members.html](#)) [recommends](#) ([./about/categories.html](#)) the use of regulatory authority (e.g., through licensing and zoning) to limit alcohol outlet density on the basis of sufficient evidence of a positive association between outlet density and excessive alcohol consumption and related harms.

[Task Force Finding \(RRoutletdensity.html\)](#)

Results from the Systematic Review

No studies were found that directly examined the effects of local interventions to limit alcohol outlet density.

Several types of studies were found that consistently indicated that alcoholic beverage outlet density and policy changes that affect alcohol outlet density were associated with excessive alcohol consumption and related harms.

Findings from the various types of the 30 qualifying studies are described below.

Policy Changes that Increased Alcohol Outlet Density

Four studies qualified for systematic review.

- Policies that increased alcohol outlet density were found to result in increased excessive alcohol consumption and related harms.
- Studies were conducted in Iceland, Finland, New Zealand, and North Carolina.

Alcoholic Beverage Retail Privatization

This occurs when governments relinquish monopoly control over the retail sale of alcoholic beverages. Privatization commonly results in increased alcohol outlet density, among other changes.

Seventeen studies that assessed the effects of privatization in 14 settings and one study of government re-monopolization qualified for the review.

- Privatization of alcohol sales was associated with increases in excessive alcohol consumption of the privatized beverage and minimal effects on beverages not privatized.
- One study of government re-monopolization indicated that re-monopolization may reduce alcohol-related harms.

Bans Against Alcoholic Beverages

Bans against alcoholic beverages reduce the density of alcohol outlets to zero. Repeal of bans allows for expanded density of outlets.

Seven studies qualified for systematic review.

- Bans against alcoholic beverages can reduce excessive alcohol consumption and related harms, particularly in isolated environments without other sources of alcohol.
- Reviewed studies were conducted in non-tribal areas of the United States and Canada and within American Indian and Native settings in Alaska, northern Canada, and the southwestern United States.

Association Between Alcohol Outlet Density Change and Alcohol-related Harms, in Which the Cause of Density Change Was Not Assessed

Nine studies qualified for systematic review.

- Generally, increased outlet density was associated with increases in alcohol-related harms.
- One possible exception was alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes for which evidence was mixed.
- Studies were conducted in the United States (6 studies), Canada (1), the United Kingdom (1), and Norway (1).

These results were based on a systematic review of all available studies, conducted on behalf of the Task Force by a team of specialists in systematic review methods, and in research, practice and policy related to excessive alcohol consumption.