

February 13, 2017

To Members of the House Commerce Committee:

When I moved to Lenexa, KS 12 years ago from North Carolina, I was absolutely shocked to find I could not purchase wine at a grocery store. In the 1970's in North Carolina, I signed multiple petitions to get "liquor by the drink". Thankfully, in 1978, the State Legislature passed a bill allowing us to finally get that glass of wine, beer, or cocktail in a restaurant, rather than having to bring our own bottle into the establishment in a brown bag. Fast forward nearly **40 years (yes, forty)** and as Yogi Berra said, this is "like Deja vu all over again".

Except now, I am 63 and signing petitions again to try to gain reasonable, flexible access to buy a bottle of wine in my now home state.

I am really confused. Why can I now go to a Hy-Vee grocery store in Kansas and buy a glass of wine in their in-house café, but cannot go to another section of that SAME store and buy a bottle of that same wine to take home to drink?

Why are we still protecting liquor stores in Kansas at the expense of our very own people? While moral platitudes may be cited, this is an issue about government overreach and protection. Liquor stores are the only beneficiaries of current law and they want to keep restrictions on the Kansas people for their ultimate profit.

The legislature has an opportunity to end this unfair monopoly and should. The current system is forcing business out of the state, which benefits no one, including the liquor store owners here to object to this legislation.

Take me for example – Kansas Liquor stores and the State of Kansas are currently only getting a small percentage of sales from my overall wine purchases. Who is getting the majority? The State of Missouri.

Truth be told, I'm shopping at Trader Joe's and Costco in Kansas City, Missouri - not the Trader Joe's and Costco in Johnson County – because on the Missouri side, I can shop for both groceries and wine. I would absolutely prefer that my wine money stay in Kansas and that's why I'm here today.

While I can't say I speak for all women, an informal poll of the females in my neighborhood finds similar sentiment. We don't want to keep taking our money across the border, but you're not giving us much option.

As a seasoned working professional who retired from the technology industry, I am not one to bring up gender preferences on many matters. However, I have been given permission to speak for several women in my neighborhood in stating a preference to shop for wine in a grocery store – or online - versus a liquor store. If I am doing business or volunteer work in Missouri, I will seek out their grocery stores...like the Cosentino's in Brookside or the Price Chopper on 103rd and State Line or the Sun Fresh in Westport RATHER than in a liquor store either here in Kansas or in Missouri.

Women make up 60% of the wine sales and consumption of the product. You don't see us flocking to liquor stores as there is often subtle discomfort in entering this typically male bastion. When I traveled to other states for business and was spending multiple nights, I always sought out buying a bottle of wine from a grocery store versus going into a liquor store. This is not a slam against liquor stores – but it is a preference. And, guess what? In almost every state I traveled to, there was a grocery store near my hotel selling wine.

It's time, ladies and gentlemen. As a Kansas consumer and taxpayer, I implore you to pass this reasonable legislation and move Kansas closer to her promise of a free market business climate. My friends and I are counting on you ... we're ready to buy our wine on the Kansas side.

Submitted by:

Karen Washburn
12448 W. 85th Terrace
Lenexa, KS 66215