

Alaska State Legislature

Official Business



State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska
99801-1182

December 28, 2017

Erika McConnell
Director
Alaska Alcohol & Marijuana Control Office
550 West 7th Ave, Suite 1600
Anchorage, AK 99501

Dear Director McConnell and ABC Board Members,

The 28th Alaska State Legislature passed House Bill 309 (HB 309) by an overwhelming majority of legislators. HB 309 helped Alaska-owned distilleries grow their small businesses by providing an opportunity for tasting rooms.

We do not always see immediate benefits of legislation, but in this case our distillery businesses were able to flourish using tasting rooms to increase in their visibility, attract more customers, compete effectively with multi-national brands, and become a more active participant in their respective communities. HB 309 was so successful that since the passage of HB 309, seven new distilleries have opened across Alaska.

The proposed regulations to limit mixing distilled products goes against the original intent of the Legislature and will negatively impact local distilleries. It is crucial that we continue to support all our small businesses and not create regulations that will hamper their ability to thrive.

HB 309 intended to allow distillers to provide samples and sell their product. The statute clearly outlines what a distiller can and cannot within their tasting rooms, how a distiller can give samples to patrons and sell their products. There was never an intention to impose limitations on serving distilled products with mixers.

Most consumers of distilled spirits do in fact mix the spirits with other products. One of the reasons the serving amount of a distilled product was limited to three ounces was the expectation that mixers would be added to the serving to approximate the way consumers would be using the product. The owners of distilleries were intimately involved in the legislative process, from drafting to passage, so we sincerely believe Alaskan distilleries have been following the letter of the law and the intent of bill.

Please do not pass the proposed regulations, which will significantly impede small business owners across Alaska, create undue burden on their current business practices, and hurt their ability to grow. We have witnessed the wide-spread support of our local distilleries and have full confidence that our distillery owners will continue to be good stewards of our communities.

Sincerely,



Sen. Peter Micciche



Rep. Chris Tuck



Sen. Berta Gardner



Rep. Scott Kawasaki



Sen. Natasha von Imhof



Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins



Sen. Bill Wielechowski



Rep. Jason Grenn



Sen. Tom Begich



Rep. Harriet Drummond



Sen. Dennis Egan

cc: Bob Klein, ABC Board Chair
Rex Leath, ABC Board Member
Robert Evans, ABC Board Member
Thomas Manning, ABC Board Member
Ellen Ganley, ABC Board Member

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August 15, 2017

Erika McConnell
Director, Alaska Alcohol & Marijuana Control Office
550 West 7th Ave, Suite 1600
Anchorage, AK 99501

Dear Director McConnell,

It has come to our attention the Alaska Alcohol & Marijuana Control office has issued an advisory notice to Alaska's distillers regarding distillery licenses and what practices are permitted in their tasting rooms.

In the 28th Alaska Legislature we sponsored HB 309 which clarified that distillers can sell and give away samples of their product under certain conditions.

We can assure you there has been no misinterpretation of the statute by the distillers and they are acting in accordance with the Legislature's intentions. Considering that many of the products sold by the distillers are intended to be mixed with other ingredients before consumption, it was assumed any sales or free samples would likely be mixed with other ingredients as well.

The Legislature worked closely with Alaska's distillers in crafting this legislation and they are well aware of what the law intends. We would also draw your attention to the well-publicized celebration ceremony of the new statute, when samples of mixed drinks using Alaska's craft spirits were provided without question.

Alaska's distillers have been making honest efforts to comply with the law as they understand it. This apparent sudden reversal of policy by your office does a great disservice to their business efforts and the intent of the law as it was passed.

Erika McConnell, Director
Alaska Alcohol and Marijuana Control Office
August 15, 2017
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Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please feel free to contact our offices directly if you have further questions.

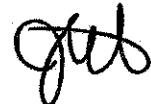
Sincerely,



Harriet Drummond
Alaska State Representative



Scott Kawasaki
Alaska State Representative



Jonathan Kreiss-Tompkins
Alaska State Representative



Chris Tuck
Alaska State Representative



Click Bishop
Alaska State Senator



Dennis Egan
Alaska State Senator



Berta Gardner
Alaska State Senator



Peter Micciche
Alaska State Senator

cc:

All Alaska distilleries