

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE LABOR AND COMMERCE STANDING COMMITTEE

January 27, 2025

1:31 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Jesse Bjorkman, Chair
Senator Kelly Merrick, Vice Chair
Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson
Senator Robert Yundt

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Forrest Dunbar

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE BILL NO. 15

"An Act relating to the sale of alcohol; relating to the posting of warning signs for alcoholic beverages; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED SB 15 OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 15

SHORT TITLE: ALCOHOL: SALE, WARNING SIGNS

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) MERRICK

01/10/25	(S)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/10/25
01/22/25	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/22/25	(S)	L&C
01/24/25	(S)	L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
01/24/25	(S)	Heard & Held
01/24/25	(S)	MINUTE (L&C)
01/27/25	(S)	L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

WITNESS REGISTER

DIANE THOMPSON, Vice President
Alaska Hospitality Retailers Association
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 15

DAVID MCCARTHY, CEO
Northern Hospitality
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 15

KERRY CROCKER, Staff
Senator Kelly Merrick
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided a summary of SB 15.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:31:22 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN called the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:31 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senator Merrick, Gray-Jackson, Yundt and Chair Bjorkman.

SB 15-ALCOHOL: SALE, WARNING SIGNS

[1:32:09 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 15 "An Act relating to the sale of alcohol; relating to the posting of warning signs for alcoholic beverages; and providing for an effective date."

[1:32:44 PM](#)

KERRY CROCKER, Staff, Senator Kelly Merrick, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, paraphrased the following submitted document titled, Summary of Senate Bill 15:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Senate Bill 15 introduces updates to state laws governing the sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages, focusing on responsible alcohol service, enhanced youth employment opportunities, and protections for individuals under 21.

Key Provisions:

- **Unemployment changes:** Allows individuals aged 18-20 to serve alcohol in restaurants, breweries, and other establishments, with required supervision to prevent underage consumption.

- **Access for Minors:** Permits individuals aged 16 and older to dine in licensed premises under specific protections.
- **Flexibility in Service Hours:** Adjusts alcohol service hours for theaters to accommodate modern entertainment needs while ensuring safety.
- **Updated Warning Signs:** Revises signage to better communicate alcohol-related risks.

These reforms aim to streamline operations for businesses, balance public safety with economic growth, and provide new job opportunities for young residents while protecting minors.

[1:33:57 PM](#)

SENATOR MERRICK asked for an at ease.

[1:34:04 PM](#)

At ease.

[1:34:51 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN reconvened the meeting.

[1:35:11 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN continued public testimony on SB 15.

[1:35:38 PM](#)

DIANE THOMPSON, Vice President, Alaska Hospitality Retailers Association, Anchorage, Alaska, testified in support of SB 15. She stated she is one of the owners of Firetap Alehouse and Restaurant in South Anchorage. She gave a brief history of [House Bill 189] from last session. She reiterated that Alaska is one of three states that does not allow 18-20-year-olds to serve alcohol. She testified concerning the shortage of workers in the hospitality industry and the lack of applicants for server and bartender positions. SB 15 will help students under the age of 21 with summer employment by allowing them to work in hospitality industries that serve alcohol. She encouraged the timely passage of SB 15.

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DAVID MCCARTHY, CEO Northern Hospitality Group Anchorage, Alaska testified in support of [SB 15] He opined that all agree SB 15 is a solution to the labor shortage and would strengthen communities. He concluded that a national debate would ensue if

it was dangerous for 16 - to 18- year-olds to serve alcohol. He stated his establishments have rules to protect both the minor and the establishment. He stated taps training requires education on alcohol consumption for all employees. He stated SB 15 will enhance the community by educating younger adults that have not been allowed to legally consume alcohol. He explained 47 states allow 18-year-olds to serve alcohol. He said the plan has already been laid out with examples from other states. He questioned how letting teenagers work is a problem and quoted the International Youth Foundation as saying, "Youth critically need life and employability skills as a way to prepare themselves to be motivated and confident decision makers, who can overcome diversity and realize their potential." He said one in three Americans receive their first job in the food and service industry and he provided reasons why working in the food and service industry is beneficial to others. He explained Alaska is not a tip credit state, 18-20-year-olds will now earn minimum wage plus tips giving youth financial opportunities in their communities. He asserted that building the community and developing future leaders begins with the hospitality industry. He emphasized the need to make Alaska more forward-thinking and adaptable to the broader world.

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CHAIR BJORKMAN closed public testimony on SB 15.

[1:42:26 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN solicited the will of the committee.

[1:42:28 PM](#)

SENATOR MERRICK moved to report SB 15, work draft 34-LS0163\A, from committee with individual recommendations and attached zero fiscal note(s).

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SENATOR BJORKMAN found no objection and SB 15 was reported from the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee.

[1:43:17 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Bjorkman adjourned the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee meeting at 1:43 p.m.