



For Immediate Release: November 13, 2008

Michigan Alcohol Distributors Secretly Ram Anti-Wine Shipping Bill Through Legislature

**—Protectionist Bill Introduced Yesterday And Hearings Set For Today In Attempt to
Avoid Public Notice—**

—Law Would End Home Deliver of Wine in Michigan—

—Michigan Caterers No Longer Able to Deliver Wine Under Bill—

(Sacramento, CALIF)—A bill designed to protect the powerful Michigan alcohol wholesalers from competition was quietly introduced into the Michigan House of Representatives yesterday, while hearings on the same bill were scheduled for today in the House Regulatory Reform Committee—a move designed to thwart any input by opposition to what amounts to a backdoor power grab by Michigan's politically powerful alcohol wholesalers. The bill stripping Michigan wine retailers of the right to ship or deliver wine to consumers in the state passed out of committee on a 6-0 vote.

[HB 6644](#) is sponsored by Representatives Barbara Farrah and Chris Ward, both recipients of significant campaign contributions from Michigan alcohol wholesalers. The "under cover of darkness" bill would strip Michigan wine merchants of their long held right to deliver wine to Michigan residents. HB 6644 is a response to a recent Michigan District Court judge's ruling that Michigan law violates the U.S. Constitution by allowing Michigan wine merchants to ship wine to residents of the state while prohibiting out-of-state wine retailers from doing the same. By stripping the right of shipping from Michigan's wine retailers, the state would put both in-state and out-of-state retailers on equal terms. However, Michigan residents would be further denied access to wines.

"This is the sort of shameful, pay-to-play politics that creates the extraordinary cynicism Americans have toward the political process," said Tom Wark, executive director of the Specialty Wine Retailers Association, an advocate for retailers and consumers who seek fair, open and well regulated wine shipping laws. "Representatives Farrah and Ward and the Michigan wholesalers created this secret, end-run around their constituents, the media and consumers for one reason: They knew if the issue was debated openly this sort of cynical, protectionist bill would be opposed by Michigan residents. Farrah, Ward and the Michigan alcohol wholesalers should be ashamed of themselves.

"This is not the first time that Michigan wholesalers attempted to strip constituents and industries of their long held rights for their own protection. After the Supreme Court of the United States overturned Michigan's laws against out-of-state wineries shipping into Michigan in 2005, alcohol wholesalers cynically attempted to pass a bill that would have stripped Michigan wineries of their rights to ship wine to the state's consumers. It failed miserably."

Wark continued, "The fact is, Michigan would realize significant tax revenue and be easily able to regulate retailer-to-consumer wine shipments. Numerous other states allow both in-state and out-of-state wine merchants to ship to residents and none of them have reported any problem with minors gaining access to wine, any difficulty in collecting taxes or being overwhelmed by regulating the trade."

Michigan alcohol wholesalers are among the most powerful lobbies in Michigan, having contributed more than \$2.5 million to state political campaigns since 2000, and contributing over \$400,000 to state political campaigns between 2007 and November 2008.

Specialty Wine Retailers Association is a national organization of wine consumers and wine merchants across the United States that advocate for fair and non-discriminatory wine shipping laws across the country. For more information see <http://www.specialtywineretailers.org>

WHAT CONSUMERS CAN DO:

1. Michigan residents must write their State Representative and tell them you want them to **VOTE NO on HB 6644** because it strips you of your long held right to have wine delivered from your favorite Michigan retailer and because it was hastily pushed through committee with no consumer input.

FIND YOUR STATE REPRESENTATIVE HERE:

http://house.michigan.gov/find_a_rep.asp

2. Non-Michigan Residents must contact their friends and family in Michigan and urge them to contact their representatives in the manner described above.

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