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Illinoisans to Lose Wine Shipping Rights June 1st

—Consumers and Tax Revenue Ignored to Reward \$6.3M in Campaign Contributions—

(Sacramento, CALIF.—Illinoisans are set to lose access to thousands of domestic and imported fine wines on June 1st when HB 429 takes effect. The new law that stripped Illinoisans of their right to have wine shipped to them from out of state wine merchants was pushed through the legislature by Illinois alcohol wholesalers, noted Specialty Wine Retailers Association, the organization that fought against passage of the law. The protectionist legislation was pushed by the same Illinois alcohol wholesalers that brought Illinois wine lovers the "Wirtz Law" with its higher wine prices and controversy over campaign contributions.

Signed into law on October 1, 2007, HB 429 removed the right of Illinoisans to purchase and have shipped to them wine from out of state retailers, a privilege that had been in place for 15 years. The law protects Illinois wholesalers and retailers from competition, while simultaneously violating the U.S. Constitution's Commerce Clause, about which the U.S. Supreme Court said in 2005, "States may not enact laws that burden out-of-state [wine] producers or shippers simply to give a competitive advantage to in-state businesses."

Alcohol Wholesalers Profits Protected For the Price of \$6.3 Million

"On June 1st Illinoisans will lose access to tens of thousands of wines that are not made available in Illinois by its wine distributors or retailers so that the profits of a very small group of very powerful wholesalers can be protected," said Tom Wark, Executive Director of Specialty Wine Retailers Association. "What we are seeing is political payoff to alcohol wholesalers for the more than \$6.3 million they've contributed to Illinois state political campaigns since 2000---the apparent price to get legislators to disregard consumers, the U.S. Constitution and the increased tax revenue that direct shipping of wine would bring into the state."

According to "FollowTheMoney.Org", which tracks state campaign contributions, the lead sponsor of HB 429, Representative Edward Acevedo, has received \$32,000 from alcohol wholesalers since 2000, including \$10,000 since the legislation was introduced last year. One Senate sponsor of HB 429, James Clayborne, Jr., has received \$85,000 from alcohol wholesaler interests since 2000, including \$15,000 since the legislation was introduced. Since 2002, Governor Rod Blagojevich, who signed HB 429, has received more than \$500,000 just from alcohol wholesalers in Illinois, \$50,000 of which was given to him since he signed the bill into law.

Protectionist Law Prevents Collection of Needed State Tax Revenue

"The sad fact is that by simply issuing permits to out-of-state retailers to ship wine into Illinois would generate millions of dollars in state tax revenue as well as allow consumers to have the same access to wines they've now had for 15 years," said Wark. "Instead, Illinois legislators prefer to cement their reputation as the protectors a privileged group of alcohol wholesalers rather than protectors of consumers."

Specialty Wine Retailers Association, based in Sacramento, California represents wine merchants and consumers across the county in advocating fair wine laws and was the only organization representing consumer interests in the battle over HB 429. More information on SWRA can be found at <http://www.specialtywineretailers.org>

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