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WINE & SPIRITS
WHOLESALE ASSOCIATION

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Unregulated Alcohol Sales are a Top Concern to Kansas Residents, New Survey Confirms

TOPEKA (April 27, 2006) – Sixty percent of self-described wine drinkers in Kansas agree that continued regulation of wine sales is necessary for the state to safeguard children from accessing alcohol and to ensure the safety and quality of the product purchased, according to a new poll by the Kansas Wine & Spirits Wholesalers Association.

“Kansas residents who appreciate wine do not want direct access to alcohol through the Internet or other unaccountable means,” said R.E. “Tuck” Duncan of the Kansas Wine & Spirits Wholesalers Association. “The vast majority of Kansans are satisfied with the selection of wines available through local retail liquor stores. They understand the risks that online and similar sales pose to our state’s regulatory system and its ability to minimize underage access to alcohol, ensure product quality, and guarantee that wine sellers pay their fair share of taxes.”

The survey further reveals that of self-described wine drinkers:

- Seventy-eight (78) percent believe shipping wine to a local retailer for consumer pick-up would best prevent underage access to alcohol.
- Seventy-three (73) percent believe shipping wine to a local retailer for consumer pick-up would best allow the state to ensure the safety and quality of wine bought by Kansas consumers.
- Sixty-seven (67) percent believe shipping wine to a local retailer for consumer pick-up would best ensure that sellers of wine pay their fair share of taxes.
- Seventy-six (76) percent already are satisfied with the selection of wine in local stores.

The poll reveals that seventy-two (72) percent of the respondent households have access to the Internet and that sixty (60) percent of Kansans are concerned that minors (persons under 21) may use the Internet to purchase beer, wine or spirits.

“In spite of these findings, the current regulatory and distribution system of alcohol safeguards in Kansas is under attack,” Duncan said. “The Kansas legislature has been considering legislation that will allow direct-to-consumer wine sales through the Internet and mail and phone orders promoted by out-of-state interests. Loosening wine shipping regulations will have unintended consequences on the sale and shipment of beer and hard liquor in the state as well, as alcohol is alcohol in the eyes of Kansas law.”

OVER

Increased Alcohol Access: Problems and Solutions

A report by the National Academy of Sciences¹ shows that 10 percent of minors obtain alcohol through the Internet or home delivery. The report warns that this number will grow with increased use of the Internet. Investigations across the country by law enforcement, elected officials, the news media and others have confirmed how easy it is for minors to purchase alcohol online and receive it at home with little fear of an ID check for proof of age by the delivery driver.

“Currently it is illegal in Kansas for anyone to deliver alcohol to the home,” Duncan said. “But California and other out-of-state wineries are lobbying to change the law so they are allowed to ship alcohol directly to consumers’ residences. They would rely on the delivery truck driver to check recipients’ IDs for proof of age, or simply to leave alcohol unattended on doorsteps. If Kansas allows such direct delivery for its local wineries, the United States Supreme Court says that the state also must allow any wine seller in the world to sell and ship directly to homes in Kansas. These sales would be not be tracked by the state government unless the sellers report them voluntarily. Further, they open the door to similar unregulated sales of beer and hard liquor.”

An alternative approach, which we support and is consistent with Kansan attitudes, would allow Kansas customers to order from any winery in the world, who would then ship the wine to a local retailer where customers to pick it up in person. The retailer would be held accountable for a face-to-face ID check, and would be required to report the sale and collect and pay taxes to the state. This approach would help keep alcohol out of the hands of minors, ensure product purity, and guarantee that Kansas Alcoholic Beverage Control would be able to track and collect taxes from these alcohol sales.

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The purpose of this study, commissioned by The Kansas Wine & Spirits Wholesalers Association, was to find out certain voter attitudes regarding beer, wines and spirits. The study consisted of 510 completed telephone interviews with Kansas registered voters. This research was conducted and completed the week of April 17, 2006. The margin of error for this study at the 95% confidence level is plus or minus 4.4%. For a full copy of the survey results, please visit www.kwsa.org.

[1] National Academy of Sciences, Institute of Medicine, “Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility,” Richard J. Bonnie and Mary Ellen O’Connell, Editors, (2004): page 174.