

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5585

AS PASSED SENATE, MARCH 18, 1991

Brief Description: Establishing a license to sell liquor in motels.

SPONSORS: Senators West, Stratton, McCaslin and Saling.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Matson, Chairman; Bluechel, McCaslin, McDonald, McMullen, Moore, Murray, and Skratek.

Staff: Jonathan Seib (786-7427)

Hearing Dates: March 4, 1991; March 6, 1991

BACKGROUND:

Hotels and clubs with class H liquor licenses may sell liquor by the bottle to registered guests for consumption in guest rooms, hospitality rooms, or at banquets. Guests may remove from the premises any unused portion of purchased liquor in its original container. To be a "hotel" for purposes of a class H license, a facility must have a dining room serving complete meals.

SUMMARY:

A new class M liquor license is established. The license may be issued to a motel, which is defined as a facility offering three or more self-contained units to travelers and transient guests. The license must not be issued to a motel offering rooms on an hourly basis. The license authorizes the motel to sell individual bottles of spirits not to exceed 50 milliliters, individual bottles of wine not to exceed 187 milliliters, and individual cans and bottles of beer not to exceed 12 ounces to registered guests for consumption in guest rooms.

The alcohol must be kept in locked honor bars and the bars must also contain snack foods. A licensee may not have honor bars in more than one-half of its guest rooms. The licensee must require proof of age from guests requesting the use of an honor bar. The guest must also sign an affidavit verifying that no one under 21 years of age will have access to the alcohol.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: yes

Fiscal Note: available

TESTIMONY FOR:

Liquor in rooms is an amenity available at large hotels, and it should be allowed at smaller, more affordable motels as well. The class M license provided for in the bill is very restrictive. The terms of the bill are a result of four years of work and now adequately address the enforcement concerns of the Liquor Control Board.

TESTIMONY AGAINST:

Concern still exists about the abuses which may occur under the bill and potential enforcement problems. Existing liquor licenses allow the sale of liquor incidental to the sale of food. The class M license is not so limited.

TESTIFIED: PRO: Ray Thieman, Innkeepers, WSHMA; Roberta Lynch, Innkeepers, WSHMA; Terry Lynch, Park Lane Motel; Cliff Webster, Washington State Hotel and Motel Assn.; CON: Carter Mitchell, State Liquor Control Board