
Commerce & Labor Committee

SSB 5051

Brief Description: Removing the sale of strong beer from the exclusive jurisdiction of the liquor control board.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Commerce & Trade (originally sponsored by Senator Jacobsen).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Allows the sale of strong beer under the same provisions as regular beer.

Hearing Date: 3/27/03

Staff: Matt Cooper (786-7106).

Background:

Beer is a malt beverage containing less than 8.0 percent alcohol. *Strong beer* is a malt beverage containing more than 8.0 percent alcohol. *Fortified wine* is a beverage made from fermented fruit containing between 14 percent and 24 percent alcohol. *Spirits* are any beverage manufactured by distillation, and wines containing more than 24 percent alcohol.

The Liquor Control Board (Board) licenses manufacturers, distributors, and retailers of beer, wine, and spirits. Beer and wine may be sold at restaurants, taverns, private clubs, microbreweries, grocery stores, and beer and wine specialty shops. Spirits are sold for off-premises consumption through the state liquor store system.

Strong beer may only be sold at locations that may sell spirits. Strong beer is taxed under the same provisions as spirits.

The Board may restrict the sale of fortified wine if it finds the sale of fortified wines would be against public interest.

Summary of Bill:

Strong beer may be manufactured, imported, distributed, and sold by Liquor Control Board licensees authorized to manufacture, import, distribute, and sell beer.

The Board may restrict the sale of strong beer if it finds the sale of strong beer would be against public interest.

Strong beer is taxed at the same rate as beer.

The Board will study the impact of the sale of strong beer and report the findings to the Legislature by December 31, 2008.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on March 18, 2003.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.