

## **No More Dry Sundays: Good For Consumers And The State**

### **Blue Law End In Sight Pro-consumer proposal more likely to pass with governor's support**

January 14, 2012

The package of popular liquor law reforms endorsed by Gov. Dannel P. Malloy today — among them, Sunday sales of alcohol, later hours for package stores and bars and an end to minimum pricing — is a winner for Connecticut.

If passed by the General Assembly, these modernizing changes in this state's "blue laws" should mean greater convenience and lower costs for consumers, a better competitive position for Connecticut and millions of dollars in additional state tax revenue every year.

The proposed legislation would allow package stores to sell alcohol (liquor, beer and wine) and supermarkets to sell beer on Sundays — something our neighbors, along with most other states, already do. In fact, Connecticut and Indiana are the only two states that completely ban Sunday sales. Mr. Malloy should go further and allow the sale of wine in supermarkets as well.

Also under the Malloy proposal, package stores could remain open until 10 p.m. rather than the current latest closing time of 9 p.m., and bars and restaurants could stay open until 2 a.m. every night rather than closing at 1 a.m. on nights other than Friday and Saturday, as they do now.

Sale of alcohol on Sunday is not a particularly controversial topic with Connecticut residents. Fully two-thirds of them supported the idea in a Quinnipiac University poll 10 months ago. A big majority want Sunday sales.

It is controversial only within the state Capitol building, where nervous lawmakers get figuratively pushed around by Carroll Hughes, chief lobbyist for the Connecticut Package Stores Association. The association's members have long opposed Sunday sales regardless of what the public wants. Package store owners fear — and perhaps rightly so — the possibility of working longer hours and facing rising costs. But they're just as likely to share in the expanded business that will come from Sunday sales.

Last year, Mr. Malloy said he would sign a Sunday sales bill if the legislature passed one. But legislators weren't up to acting in the public interest. They apparently had been on the receiving end of a blitz of letters written by the package store lobby and its friends.

Lawmakers' kowtowing to pressure exerted by a determined and disciplined special interest group headed by a powerful lobbyist is not our idea of good legislating.

This year, with Mr. Malloy off the sidelines and onto the field in pursuit of his pro-consumer package of liquor-law reforms, maybe the results will be different. We hope so.