

The Observer

Erie County passes resolution against wine sales in grocery stores

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BUFFALO -The Erie County Legislature last week voted unanimously to adopt a resolution urging the New York State Senate and New York State Assembly to reject Governor Paterson's plan to legalize the sale of wine in grocery stores, gas stations, delis, bodegas and anywhere beer is now sold.

If implemented, this change would force more than 1,000 stores to close and cost the state more than 4,500 valuable jobs. Additionally, the sale of wine in every store where beer is now available would give teenagers greater access to alcohol resulting in a heightened risk of underage drinking and fatal drunk driving accidents.

In its resolution against the plan, the Erie County Legislature says the proposal will have detrimental impacts for the state including unemployment, lost income tax and emptied retail space.

According to an economic impact study completed for the industry prior to the collapse of the state's economy, nearly 40 percent of the wine stores in the state would be forced out of business if the sale of wine were legalized in every deli, corner store, gas station, bodega and grocery store in New York. As a result, more than 4,500 people would be forced out of work in the worst economy the state has experienced in generations.

"We applaud the Erie County Legislature for once again rejecting the Governor's plan which would only put more people in our state's unemployment lines and increase the availability of alcohol to teenagers," said Jeff Saunders, founder of the Last Store on Main Street coalition and president of the Retailers Alliance. "We are confident that the State Legislature will reject this misguided proposal as they did last year, saving thousands of jobs of hardworking New Yorkers and protecting our state's teenagers."

Law enforcement agencies across the state, along with substance abuse experts, have opposed legalizing the sale of wine in 19,000 new outlets because they believe it will lead to an increase in underage drinking. New York State spends \$3.2 billion annually to deal with the impact of underage drinking currently, according to the State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services.

"This idea is not only dangerous to our young people; it's costly to New York taxpayers," said Stefan Kalogridis, a coalition leader and president of the New York State Liquor Store Association. "New York should be doing more to fight underage drinking and job loss. The State Legislature should reject Governor Paterson's proposal immediately."

No state in more than 28 years has approved legislation legalizing the sale of wine in grocery stores, with Kentucky, Tennessee and Colorado joining New York in the last year in rejecting efforts by Big Box stores to take over this business