

Lawmaker Calls for Passage of Bill to Allow Direct Shipment of Wine in Delaware

June 26, 2014

Dear Editor,

By State Representative Jeff Spiegelman

11th Representative District

R-Clayton

Delawareans who enjoy a glass of wine with dinner, during family gatherings, or with that special someone must hope that their favorite bottle is within a short driving distance. This is because adult wine consumers in Delaware are not legally allowed to have it shipped directly to their homes. Many have seen lists on their favorite winery websites of states where wine cannot be shipped to a customer and, sadly, Delaware is on that ever-shortening list. While this is an inconvenience and cause of frustration for many citizens of this great state, it is also a potential financial downfall for many wineries across the nation and right here in our own growing wine-agriculture and craft-tourism industries.

It is common knowledge that most of the approximately 8,000 wineries in the United States are small businesses and many of them rely heavily on the ability to ship wine directly to consumers. The times are changing and the majority of states are already allowing direct-to-consumer sales. Delaware, for the sake of the small business wineries located in the state, needs to keep up with the times and begin allowing this kind of transaction.

For that reason I am a supporter of House Substitute 1 for House Bill 60 because I believe it will provide a great opportunity for small businesses to earn more revenue through direct shipment. My constituents are being directly and negatively affected by the fact that Delaware is prohibiting this method of sale and distribution to take place. Harvest Ridge Winery, proudly located in the 11th District in Marydel, DE, and other wineries around the state would have a more favorable economic atmosphere to expand their businesses here in Delaware and create badly needed economic opportunities.

The legislation also sets up a regulatory system to ensure that the practice is being conducted legally, ethically, and morally. The bill does its best to ensure that alcohol is not being purchased by Delaware residents under the age of 21. Any winery wishing to ship their product to the state of Delaware must obtain a license to do so. Any carrier company transporting the product (UPS, FedEx, etc.) would also be required to obtain a license. The bill, if it were signed into law, would require that all wine shipments be clearly marked so carriers know what the packages contain and even goes so far as to require that a person at least 21 years of age signs for the delivery when it reaches its destination.

It is very important to remember that this ban on the direct shipment of wine in Delaware stifles economic growth within the state. Specifically, Harvest Ridge Winery in Marydel (as mentioned above), Nassau Valley Vineyards & Winery near Lewes, and Pizzadili Vineyard & Winery in Felton

are just examples of Delaware small businesses that are being negatively impacted by this ban. Lifting this and regulating the sale and distribution of wine by direct-to-consumer sales will improve the market among these small businesses, giving them access to a great new source of revenue. I urge my colleagues to vote “yes” on this consumer-friendly bill before the session concludes on June 30th.