

Key “Friend of Grocers” Issue



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WGA Position Paper

Growlers

Grocers currently sell their customers craft beer in cans and bottles, but they can't offer that same beer in a 64 oz. jug called a growler. The only difference is the container. Wisconsin law specifies that Class A licensees (grocers/c-stores) sell beer in its original, sealed container. The WGA is working with Representative Joan Ballweg (R-Markesan) to draft legislation that would update Wisconsin law to allow grocers and other Class A licensees to fill and sell growlers.

Growlers have become increasingly popular and appeal to a wide variety of beer drinkers as they are reusable and allow them to bring home fresh, hand-crafted beer. Allowing grocers to sell and fill growlers allows the state of Wisconsin as a whole to capitalize on this growing trend. Most craft beer connoisseurs prefer draft beer over bottled beer. In addition, growlers are environmentally friendly because they are refilled and there is no additional packaging waste.

For grocers, being able to fill growlers for off premise consumption allows them to feature local craft beer in their stores and to meet the growing demands of their customers. Many of Wisconsin's local microbreweries are not large enough to bottle their beer for mass production giving them a disadvantage compared to the larger, national brewing companies. In addition, not all beers are available in bottles or cans, especially seasonal or hand-crafted beers and the growler allows enthusiasts to get the beer straight from the source.

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Allowing growlers will be economically advantageous for Wisconsin as a whole, as it would help promote Wisconsin businesses and bring in additional revenue. Craft beer sales increased 17% in 2013 and have seen steady double digit increases over the past three years.

Wisconsin ranks 9th nationally in craft breweries per capita with more than 60 breweries. Yet, our growler laws are behind that average. A number of states throughout the US have passed legislation allowing grocery stores to sell and fill growlers with success. Wisconsin grocers would like to join the list of states that allow Class A licensees to fill and sell growlers responsibly, in a safe and controlled fashion.

Action Requested: Ask your legislator for their support to allow growlers in grocery stores. Let them know that the bill is being drafted, and ask them if they will co-sponsor the bill when it is ready.

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