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ADVOCATING RESPONSIBILITY.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

January 2010

Welcome to January 2010. Hard to believe we are already one month into the Second Regular Session. At the Legislature, the time has been moving quickly with all the policy committees meeting to hold public hearing on new bills and finalize actions on bills from the First Regular Session.

There are several high profile issues already on the horizon for debate. The Labor Committee heard from the business community on a measure to mandate all employers provide paid sick leave. The Portland Press Herald had it correct with the editorial on January 16th with, LD 1665 – “There is too much to be done to erase the anti-business label for Maine to pass this law.”

To view text of the proposed Paid sick leave bill, click here:
(<http://www.mainelegislature.org/LawMakerWeb/summary.asp?ID=280035113>)

MBWDA is actively watching several issues to address changes in the Alcohol Tastings Law. Last session the law, LD 498 added malt liquor and spirits to the wine tastings law. The implementation of the new provisions created concern with inspectors who enforce the provisions requiring tastings “must be conducted in a manner that precludes the possibility of observation by children.”

The public policy objectives are to balance the opportunities for adults to consume alcohol in a responsible environment, give retailers the opportunity to showcase new products, and prevent the improper socialization of alcohol. During the past several months while the existing law has been in place, many legitimate sales to responsible consumers have been lost due to retailers complying with the law. Examples are cited in the MPBN News story below.

Maine Public Broadcasting Network: Wine Tasting Restrictions Under Legislative Scrutiny

(<http://www.mpbn.net/News/MaineNews/tabid/181/ctl/ViewItem/mid/3475/ItemId/10734/Default.aspx>)

There are currently two legislative options, LD 1628 (<http://www.mainelegislature.org/LawMakerWeb/summary.asp?ID=280035052>) and LD 1691 (<http://www.mainelegislature.org/LawMakerWeb/summary.asp?ID=280035207>) being presented that are designed to balance the needs of licensed retailers to introduce legitimate products and protect our youths from irresponsible consumption not generally associated with tasting events.

We are confident that common sense will prevail and responsible consumers will be afforded the opportunity to participate in tasting of alcoholic beverages with appropriate public safety controls.

We will continue to monitor the progress of the bills as they are debated. Stay tuned to “HOT TOPICS” for updates on this and other key pieces of legislation.

— Cheryl Timberlake
Executive Vice President