



Washington State Liquor Control Board

May 30, 2012

Statement of Board member Ruthann Kurose regarding the City of Seattle's petition to open rule-making on WAC 314-11-070

As a member of this Board, I fully accept my responsibility to make public safety the paramount factor in the votes that I cast.

I am voting today to respectfully deny the city of Seattle's petition to open rule-making for allowing a city to petition the Board for extended hours of alcohol service.

Like my Board colleagues, I have spent countless hours over the past months researching this issue.

I have spoken with the Mayor of Seattle, several members of the City Council and staff, and countless representatives of affected community stakeholders, our own Liquor Board staff and enforcement personnel, as well as law enforcement and citizens around the State.

I continue to support Seattle's efforts to provide safeguards for public safety while promoting an active and vibrant nightlife.

However, I'm not convinced how extended service hours can increase public safety.

Vancouver's Example

If we look at our neighbor to the north, Vancouver, British Columbia, we can see that the move to extended alcohol service hours had its challenges. Recently, the Vancouver Courier reported that necessary increases of late night police patrols have forced the Vancouver police to request \$900,000 for liquor, firearm squads.

Police calls, fights, assaults, and overall violence increased. In a study examining two periods -- one before the policy change and one afterwards -- violence had increased by 138.7%.

The City of Vancouver attributes their increase in police intervention to the increase in nightlife visitors that come with extended hours.

A safe and responsible Nightlife Initiative should not increase this kind of risk to public safety.

Impact to LCB

I am also concerned about the impact extended hours of alcohol service may have on the Liquor Control Board as an agency.

According to our enforcement and licensing staff, most public safety violations in nightclubs happen in the late night and early morning hours.

The high rate of non-compliance at these times raises concerns that enforcement staff can maintain its current level of oversight in a system with later or around the clock sales.

The agency has no resources to increase enforcement, even as the number of on-premises establishments continues to rise.

Conclusion

We all agree that a vibrant, safe nightlife is good for business and can be good for public safety.

However, after reviewing the studies, it's hard to conclude that extended service hours will lead to a more vibrant and safe nightlife.

Currently I see that extending service hours may increase revenue, but have negative health and safety implications.

I have a difficult time comparing economic benefits with costs to public safety.

Additionally, the outcomes I see consistently lead me to believe that it is difficult to create a safe environment and that significant increased resources and regulations are needed to mitigate the adverse effects.

There has been much discussion about the development of a "local option". And while the City of Seattle can do much to stimulate local nightlife and entertainment, the sale and service of alcohol is a statewide issue and Seattle is not an island.

Changes to the sale and service of alcohol will impact City residents outside any locally designated nightlife zone as well as surrounding communities.

I do not believe the impact on people and communities outside any designated zone has yet been given adequate consideration.

I feel that since this proposal has broad state authority & local control issues, and gives economic advantages to some licensees, this may be a decision requiring Seattle to engage the support of the State Legislature.

Should the State determine that extending hours of alcohol service is appropriate in Washington, the Board will make it happen.

Today I am not convinced there is a framework in place to provide the additional public safety response to meet extended hours. Therefore I will vote to reject the City of Seattle's petition.

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