



TO: Joint Committee on Finance Chairs Alberta Darling and John Nygren
CC: Honorable Members of the Wisconsin Legislature

FROM: Eric Bott, State Director
Americans for Prosperity-Wisconsin

DATE: June 1st, 2017

RE: Stop Sneak Attack on Wineries, Craft Breweries, and Artisan Distilleries

It has come to our attention that three or more special interest groups are quietly circulating a budget motion and statutory language seeking to harm Wisconsin's growing craft alcoholic beverage industry and limit consumer choice. If and when these interests approach you, we respectfully request that you flatly reject their surreptitious efforts.

The draft motion, leaked to us by multiple interested parties, seeks to further strengthen the near monopoly of some interests pushing it while directly attacking the competitors of another. Unlike the proponents of the motion, we've reached out to the owners of several small wineries, distilleries, and breweries. They're troubled by what they see happening in Madison.

Based on conversations with these small business owners, we fear that the two-pronged motion could preclude at least one common practice at dozens of small businesses in Wisconsin from continuing. We're also told by these entrepreneurs that the motion could reduce revenues and limit growth and investment in these sectors in the future. Regardless of the impacts, Wisconsin's craft breweries, wineries, and artisan distilleries deserve a seat at the table for a discussion on regulatory changes that may threaten their livelihoods and those of their employees.

Furthermore, the motion would create a new massive bureaucracy called the Office of Alcohol Beverages Enforcement. Although we can only guess at the intention behind this office because it is being proposed in secret, it appears that it would be charged with regulating and enforcing against wineries, craft breweries, artisan distilleries, and other businesses in Wisconsin.

Corporate welfare is bad enough when it is supported out in the open or when it consists of grants, tax breaks, or other goodies dished out by government to one interest or another. When government takes the next step of attacking individual small business owners in secret to help the politically connected it rises to a new level of repugnancy. It's no wonder the proponents of this motion conduct their work in the shadows.

In recent years, you have helped lead this legislature as it has lead the nation in advancing economic liberty and enacting pro-growth reforms. It would be truly tragic for this legislature to embrace this underhanded assault on three small but thriving sectors of Wisconsin's economy now.

Government should not be used as a weapon to help established, politically connected interests harm the new kid on the block. On behalf of more than 130,000 Americans for Prosperity activists in Wisconsin, I ask you to continue to champion the principles of limited government by rejecting any backroom attempts to harm Wisconsin's wineries, craft breweries, or artisan distilleries and the consumers who enjoy their products.

Based on your past records and your recent comments suggesting that you are working to avoid the typical "999 motion," we have confidence that you will do the right thing. Thank you for your consideration and continued leadership to expand opportunity and liberty in Wisconsin.

For more information, please contact Eric Bott at ebott@afphq.org.