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An Act To Amend the Laws Governing the Taste Testing of Alcoholic Beverages

Emergency preamble. Whereas, acts and resolves of the Legislature do not become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

Whereas, current law is prohibitive to retail establishments that wish to conduct tastings of alcoholic beverages; and

Whereas, in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now, therefore,

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 28-A MRSA §460, sub-§2, ¶N, as enacted by PL 2009, c. 459, §1, is amended to read:

~~N. Taste-testing activities must be conducted in a manner that precludes the possibility of observation by children.~~For a minimum of 7 days immediately prior to a taste-testing event, the agency liquor store shall post prominently at the entrance to the store a sign that announces the date and time of the event. The Department of Public Safety shall report annually by January 15th to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over alcohol regulation matters regarding the ~~operation and effectiveness of this paragraph~~ in providing proper notice to adults who may wish to preclude minors from observing the taste testing of alcoholic beverages.

Sec. 2. 28-A MRSA §1205, sub-§2, ¶L, as enacted by PL 2009, c. 459, §2, is amended to read:

~~L. Taste-testing activities must be conducted in a manner that precludes the possibility of observation by children.~~For a minimum of 7 days immediately prior to a taste-testing event, the retail licensee shall post prominently at the entrance to the store a sign that announces the date and time of the event. The Department of Public Safety shall report annually by January 15th to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over alcohol regulation matters regarding the ~~operation and effectiveness of this paragraph~~ in providing proper notice to adults who may wish to preclude minors from observing the taste testing of alcoholic beverages.

Sec. 3. 28-A MRSA §1207, as enacted by PL 2009, c. 438, §5, is reallocated to 28-A MRSA §1208.

§ 1208. Dual liquor license

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the bureau may issue a dual liquor license to a retail establishment to serve wine to be consumed on the premises in accordance with subsection 2 if that establishment is licensed to sell wine to be consumed off the premises and meets the criteria listed in subsection 1.

1. Minimum criteria. In order for the bureau to issue a dual liquor license in accordance with this section the following criteria must be met:

- A. The licensee has submitted an application as prescribed by the bureau and the fee under subsection 3 to the bureau;
- B. The licensee's establishment includes a full kitchen that prepares hot and cold meals to be consumed on the premises;
- C. The licensee's establishment includes at least 2 restrooms available for use by patrons;
- D. The licensee has dedicated an area of the establishment with table seating for a minimum of 16 people to sit and eat a meal prepared by the licensee;
- E. The licensee carries a stock of at least \$35,000 of wine;
- F. The licensee has not committed a violation of this chapter during the past 2 years; and
- G. The licensee has received approval from the appropriate municipal officers prior to submitting an application to the bureau.

2. License requirements. The holder of a dual liquor license is governed by the following when serving wine to be consumed on the premises:

- A. Each serving of wine must be dispensed by the licensee or an employee of the licensee who is at least 21 years of age from a stock of wine that is separated from the wine that is for sale for consumption off the premises;
- B. The licensee shall ensure that at least 2 employees at least 21 years of age are present at all times when wine is being consumed on the premises with at least one whose primary responsibility is sales of wine and other items sold to be consumed off the premises;
- C. Wine may be served only to be consumed on the premises when accompanied by a full meal. For the purposes of this paragraph, "full meal" means a diversified selection of food that cannot ordinarily be consumed without the use of tableware and cannot be conveniently consumed while standing or walking;
- D. Patrons of the establishment may not consume any alcoholic beverage on the premises unless it is served in accordance with this section by the licensee or an employee of the licensee; and
- E. A licensee may not serve wine to be consumed on the premises after 8:00 p.m.

3. License fee. The license fee for a dual liquor license is \$600 annually in addition to the license to sell malt liquor or wine for consumption off the premises.

4. Rules. The bureau shall adopt rules to implement this section. Rules adopted in accordance with this subsection are routine technical rules as defined by Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

Sec. 4. 28-A MRS §1207, sub-§1, as enacted by PL 2009, c. 459, §4, is amended to read:

1. Taste testing on off-premise retail licensee's premises. Subject to the conditions in subsection 2, the bureau may authorize an off-premise retail licensee stocking at least 100 different brands~~labels~~ of malt liquor to conduct taste testing of malt liquor on that licensee's premises. Any other consumption of alcoholic beverages on an off-premise retail licensee's premises is prohibited, except as permitted under section 460 or 1205.

Sec. 5. 28-A MRSA §1207, sub-§2, ¶L, as enacted by PL 2009, c. 459, §4, is amended to read:

~~L. Taste-testing activities must be conducted in a manner that precludes the possibility of observation by children. For a minimum of 7 days immediately prior to a taste-testing event, the retail licensee shall post prominently at the entrance to the store a sign that announces the date and time of the event. The Department of Public Safety shall report annually by January 15th to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over alcohol regulation matters regarding the operation and effectiveness of this paragraph in providing proper notice to adults who may wish to preclude minors from observing the taste testing of alcoholic beverages.~~

Emergency clause. In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this legislation takes effect when approved.

SUMMARY

This bill amends the law governing the taste testing of alcoholic beverages to remove a provision that requires taste testing of alcoholic beverages by licensed retail establishments to be conducted in a manner that precludes the possibility of observation by children. It replaces that provision with a requirement that signs announcing the time and date of a taste-testing event be posted for at least 7 days immediately prior to the event. The bill also makes a minor technical clarification.