



PRESS RELEASE

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PA Chamber encourages state store privatization

HARRISBURG, PA – The **Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry** today urged the General Assembly to begin the process of getting the Commonwealth out of the liquor sales business.

“With the continued challenges facing the economy today and pressures on taxpayers to fund government at all levels, the time has come to have a serious dialogue about the proper role of state government,” said PA Chamber Government Affairs Director Stephanie Catarino Wissman, who joined House Majority Leader Mike Turzai, R-Allegheny, and other state lawmakers at a Capitol News conference to unveil state store privatization legislation (H.B. 11). “The sale of liquor is not an essential function of government and would be better off for a variety of reasons in the capable hands of the private sector.”

Only one other state – Utah – controls the sale of liquor.

Under H.B. 11, the state’s approximately 609 liquor stores would be closed, and 1,250 licenses would be auctioned. About half of those licenses would be available for retailers and grocery stores. A licensing category would also be created for smaller, independent retailers.

The bill would encourage the hiring of nearly 5,000 existing state store workers by offering tax credits to private employers and putting in place a preferential hiring system at state agencies that hire state store workers.

The Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board would still be charged with enforcement.

Wissman said the move toward privatization is the right thing for the Commonwealth to do because it would enable state government to focus increasingly limited resources on core services and functions, while improving cost and convenience for consumers. Additionally, privatized liquor sales could generate even more revenue for the state because private businesses would pay some taxes currently not applicable to government-run stores.

“House Bill 11 adequately addresses the myriad considerations and concerns surrounding the privatization debate,” Wissman said. “At the very least, it is an excellent starting point for a long-overdue discussion about ending Pennsylvania’s liquor monopoly and allowing the free enterprise system to work with regard to the responsible sale of alcohol.”

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