



## Observations, Commentary & Trends

### *Michigan's alcohol distribution system in place for important reasons*

**To the Editor:**

The recent column by Phil Power regarding Michigan regulations on alcohol distribution (*Harbor Light*, 12/3/08) reveals his lack of understanding about the role distributors play in providing choice to consumers, creating local jobs, fighting underage drinking and giving back to our communities.

Michigan's licensed alcohol distribution system is in place for important reasons.

It allows us to keep dangerous products off our shelves. It helps state and law enforcement agencies track all alcohol products so minors don't illegally consume them. It increases distribution efficiency across the entire chain, from producer to distributor to retailer to consumer, to keep costs in check, encourage business growth and create good-paying jobs. It increases accountability and ensures Michigan collects taxes to pay for crucial public services.

At every level, Michigan's system for how beer, wine and liquor is sold is designed to protect consumers, while providing them with a tremendous range of choice, with responsible adults having access to tens of thousands of varieties of beer, wine and liquor in Michigan.

Family owned distributors like ours have been in the

community for generations. My company has served northwest Michigan for 75 years. We employ 32 workers, paying good wages and benefits. We are also active in many local charitable causes that help families in our community.

We are proud to serve and invest in our community in these tough economic times. And we are proud of our role in providing safe, quality products and wide choice to consumers. We support regulations because they protect consumers and require full accountability at every step of the alcohol distribution chain.

The fact is Michigan's successful alcohol regulations are under siege today by a small special interest group that has publicly described its real goal as alcohol "anarchy."

This out-of-state group of California wine elites wants to undermine Michigan's laws, which were designed to reflect the values and priorities of Michigan citizens. If these aficionados of expensive high-end wines get their way, cyber liquor stores can sell alcohol directly to consumers and bypass Michigan laws designed to keep alcohol out of the hands of minors and dangerous products away from consumers. They essentially want to tear down

the entire structure of Michigan's alcohol distribution laws that have kept consumers safe, helped reduce underage drinking, generated tax revenue and provided wide consumer choice.

The concern about minors buying alcohol online is real. A 2006 Teenage Research Unlimited study discovered that millions of teens nationwide have online access to alcohol. Teen access to alcohol via the Internet is a real concern and it would be irresponsible for us to turn the other way while some high-end wine aficionados – abetted by Mr. Powers' misinformation – undermine regulations designed to protect Michigan consumers and our kids.

Michigan's alcohol distribution laws are crucial to protecting Michigan jobs, Michigan families and Michigan's quality of life. We support regulations, not more loopholes.

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