

Twin Falls Times News, Thursday, Feb. 26, 2009 – Editorial (2 pages)

## Cows not sacred, but beer, wine are

Let's acknowledge the obvious: Former Idaho state Sen. Bill Roden and the other lobbyists for Idaho's beer and wine distributors are the best in the business. Then let's step back and consider that, despite the support of the chairman of the House Revenue and Taxation Committee and other key lawmakers, legislators on Wednesday refused to raise the beer tax in Idaho. It would have been the first increase in 48 years, and the first-ever raise for the wine tax.

In a year when the Legislature may not be able to find the money to continue funding drug, alcohol and mental health courts and the counseling that helps reduce prison inmate numbers, Wednesday's 13-5 vote spiking the tax increase was a specter to behold.

Nine of the 13 members of the committee who voted against raising the tax received a total of \$3,150 in campaign contributions from Roden's Idaho Beer and Wine Distributors Association Political Action Committee in 2008. Only one of the five pro-increase lawmakers, Rep. JoAnn Wood, R-Rigby, got IBWDA money - \$300 - last year.

Some who helped kill the bill, including Rep. [Scott Bedke](#), R-Oakley, argued that the legislation should have targeted the tax increase based on volume or alcohol content. Roden and company have used that argument before. We disagree. The proposal to triple the tax on beer and wine was fair and would have cost less than \$11 a year for someone who drank a six-pack a week and less than \$14 a year for someone who drank six glasses of wine per week.

That isn't going to turn anybody into a teetotaler, even in a recession.

"If not now, when?" asked Rep. George Sayler, D-Coeur d'Alene. "It hasn't been now or when for the past 48 years."

Wood, arguably the House's most persistent tax hawk, put it best:

"We've been waiting 40 years to find a compromise. My goodness, Mr. Chairman, that's long enough."

So the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee must now figure out to how - or if - to pay for drug, alcohol and mental health courts and counseling with money it doesn't have. If the budget-writing committees can't, then members of Rev and Tax will be back next session to look for new revenue sources.

We'll need the money to build more prison cells.

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**Contributions from the Idaho Beer and Wine Distributors Association Political Action Committee** to members of the Idaho House Revenue and Taxation Committee who voted against raising the state's beer and wine tax on Wednesday:

- Rep. Leonore Hardy Barrett, R-Challis, \$300
- Rep. [Scott Bedke](#), R-Oakley, \$300
- Rep. Jim Clark, R-Hayden Lake, \$400
- Rep. Gary Collins, R-Nampa, \$250
- Rep. Phil Hart, R-Athol, \$300
- Rep. Mike Moyle, R-Star, \$500
- Rep. Ken Roberts, R-Donnelly, \$400
- Rep. James Ruchti, D-Pocatello, \$400
- Rep. Bob Schaefer, R-Nampa, \$300

**Contribution to legislator who voted for the increase:**

- Rep. JoAnn Wood, R-Rigby, \$300

**Other beer and wine contributions to representatives who opposed raising taxes:**

- Spirit Distributing Company: Moyle, \$200
- Anheuser-Busch: Moyle, \$600; Ruchti, \$500