

YOUR VIEW: Peter H. Cressy

Here's To Sunday Sales At Package Stores

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As a Connecticut-bred and -educated native, I find it astonishing to note that our state remains the only one in the entire Northeast that clings to a Colonial-era blue law ban on Sunday liquor sales at package stores.

Is this the result of some great moral imperative designed to protect our citizens? Hardly. Rather, it is the stubborn resistance of a small, politically connected group of package store owners who disrespect and inconvenience Connecticut consumers, and allow their lobbyist to spread disinformation to protect a state-mandated day off.

All the while, these package store owners cripple border area shops whose customers on Sundays head in droves to New York, Massachusetts and Rhode Island, with the attendant loss of significant state tax revenues.

With a multibillion-dollar hole in the state's budget in desperate need of filling, it is well past time to chuck aside a costly and inconvenient anachronism that benefits the well-connected few at the expense of the wider public.

But first a few facts from the data to rebut the falsehoods spread by those opposing Sunday sales of liquor:

Opponents of Sunday sales say the state would gain only \$228,000 in new revenue. How this estimate was developed is a mystery because it lacks substantiation.

Instead, the experience of two nearby states that recently permitted Sunday sales is highly instructive and not fantasy or spin. Pennsylvania, with only 28 percent of stores open on Sunday, saw retail volume increase by 8.3 percent; and in Massachusetts, a state-sponsored survey revealed a 5 percent volume increase.

Based on the real experience and actual percentages from those states, new Connecticut tax revenues from increased sales of distilled spirits alone would reach between \$2 million and \$3.3 million. That, of course, is based on partial store openings and does not include beer and wine, which would bring more than \$10 million to the state's coffers.

Connecticut is one of only three states that does not permit sales of beer, wine or distilled spirits from package stores on Sunday. For distilled spirits, 36 states now permit Sunday sales, with 14 states since 2002 taking advantage of increased state tax revenue.

In Connecticut, liquor consumption is legal on Sundays in bars, nightclubs and restaurants. So the fatuous idea of a state-required day without alcohol has no meaning. Further, the notion of increased costs from social harms resulting from permitting Sunday package store sales is another hypocritical red herring floated by opponents of the idea. Based on U.S. government data, a comparison of states that permit Sunday package store sales vs. those that don't found no increase or correlation to social harms such as drunken driving or underage drinking.

Whether or not our Puritan ancestors like it, Sunday has become the second busiest shopping day of the

week for our hard-working, culturally modern Connecticut consumers.

Allowing Sunday liquor store sales would force no unwilling store owner to open. Instead, in a most American expression of economic democracy, this would allow those store owners who wish to respect their customers to choose to open.

Finally, in the desperate budget situation that the state is facing, all facts and evidence show that the state would gain millions in new revenue, and consumers would gain the reasonable, modern convenience they deserve.

And, the line of Connecticut license plates in New York, Massachusetts and Rhode Island package store parking lots would end.

•Peter H. Cressy, president and CEO of the Distilled Spirits Council in Washington, was raised in Newington and Norwich and graduated from Yale University.