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## A state strapped for cash should look to antiquated liquor laws

By Ben Jenkins



### Tennessee Voices

I should have known this past holiday weekend in Tennessee meant liquor stores were closed Saturday and Sunday.

As a representative of the distilled spirits industry, it's my job to know. But when my plane touched down Saturday morning, I had other things on my mind; namely, surprising my family. What better way to show up at the cookout than with a bottle of premium Tennessee whiskey for the adults to sip in the shade — a little escape from the humidity?

I headed for the liquor store, only to find it closed for the entire weekend. Despite Tennessee's ratification of the 21st Amendment ending Prohibition more than 75 years ago, the effects of that failed experiment in social engineering linger today.

The most notorious example can be found every Sunday. Tennessee is one of 14 states that continue clinging to colonial-era "blue laws" that ban Sunday sales at liquor stores. However, consumer demographics have changed quite a bit since 1933. Sunday has become the second-busiest retail shopping day of the week. As would-be consumers spend Sundays flocking to malls, shopping for groceries and eating at restaurants, Tennessee's package-store owners have no choice but to turn customers away at the door. As a result, the state stubbornly flushes millions in much-needed tax revenue down the drain while forcing store owners to unwittingly inconvenience their culturally modern customers.

Besides prohibiting Sunday sales, we belong to an even more exclusive club of states with outdated liquor laws. Tennessee is one of five states that ban package-alcohol sales on July 4. This draconian ban, coupled with the futile Sunday ban, aligned perfectly this year to black out an entire weekend of package store sales and hurt consumers, retailers and the state treasury, which missed out on significant tax revenue. As the legislature looks under every seat cushion for revenue, Sunday and holiday sales should be a no-brainer. A recent economic analysis found that year-round Sunday sales would generate up to nearly \$3 million in additional state tax revenues.

As Tennesseans come away from this beautiful holiday weekend, let's raise a toast to Old Glory, and hope that by this time next year, we've abolished these remaining vestiges of Prohibition that to this day bind retailers and consumers in the shadow of a bygone era.