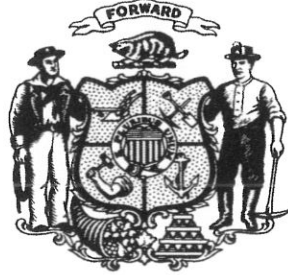


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January 10, 2019

Members of the Study Committee on Alcohol Beverages Enforcement:

At the study committee's November 28, 2018 meeting, I provided an update on the prospect of future meetings. It had come to my attention that Governor-elect Tony Evers' administration may be open to making some structural changes to how alcohol beverages enforcement is managed by the state. At the request of several representatives from the alcohol beverages industry, I postponed making a decision on whether to end the committee or convene it again in January. I did so in order to give the industry time to develop principles regarding the future of alcohol beverage enforcement in Wisconsin and in hope of finding a compromise acceptable to the Evers' administration and the state legislature. Unfortunately, those discussions have yet to produce a satisfactory and timely result.

Accordingly, I am sending you this letter to inform you that I do not plan on convening the committee for additional meetings. Since our last meeting, industry representatives have worked hard to address concerns shared by many committee members to reimagine alcohol enforcement. Despite these efforts, a compromise could not be found in time for the study committee process to be used in a meaningful way to carefully examine and recommend legislation for the upcoming legislative session. We simply do not have enough time at this point to get the work done as part of the study committee process.

Clearly alcohol enforcement is an imperative issue facing our state. We must work to reverse the Department of Revenue's complete lack of interest and attention to it. In the last few weeks alone I have seen a number of stories in the media in which businesses were illegally providing alcohol to customers. From free shots of whiskey at an unlicensed Christmas tree farm to a bourbon tasting at an unlicensed jewelry store, the examples of unlicensed unregulated dispensing of alcohol have become routine and must be addressed to ensure public safety.

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From our very first meeting this past summer, a theme emerged from committee members and invited speakers that our state must start enforcing the law as written and proactively providing guidance to the public. It also became clear that the current structure to support alcohol enforcement at the Department of Revenue is dysfunctional. Throughout the process, committee members were reassured by the department that structural changes were underway to better serve consumers and the regulated community. However, after many meetings, nothing ever materialized or was presented to the committee. We were all willing to allow the department to fix the problem themselves but it simply has not happened. I encourage the new administration to take this effort seriously. Whether addressed through an internal restructuring or future legislation, the work of this committee makes clear that it is dire for Wisconsin to address the problem in the very near future.

While the window for our study committee to further facilitate structural changes that improve alcohol enforcement has passed, I stand ready to support a continuing effort to find a solution to this problem. I also encourage you to remain engaged.

Finally, I would like to thank you for your efforts to support the study committee process. I greatly appreciate your diligence and thoughtful contributions; the recommendations we produced are the result of your leadership and service to the state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Rob Swearingen".

Representative Rob Swearingen  
Chair, Study Committee on Alcohol  
Beverages Enforcement

RS:ksm