



Restaurateurs Want to Protect Their Freedoms

By Brian DeBano, Michigan Restaurant Association President & CEO

November 19, 2013

Freedoms of business owners are frequently under attack by government; and a recent issue in Lansing that many find absurd is yet another example. Michigan restaurant and bar owners simply want to do what their counterparts in every other state in the nation have always had the right to do – use logoed barware items like glassware, napkins, and coasters in their establishments. Think of enjoying your favorite iced cold Michigan microbrew in a glass specially designed and logoed to maximize its unique character and you'll understand where I'm coming from!

Legislation recently passed by the Michigan State Senate attempts to take the current prohibition-era ban on logoed barware and lock it into state law.

If you think this kind of law is Lansing overreach at its worst (if not absurd), you are not alone. A recent statewide poll conducted by the Marketing Research Group showed that 75 percent of Michiganders stated they either strongly or somewhat supported getting rid of the ban on logoed barware. Even Governor Snyder's Liquor Rules Advisory Committee recommended its elimination.

While states have widely varying statutes and rules regarding the extent to which logoed barware items may be given to restaurants and bars as gifts, Michigan is the only state in the nation that prevents them from even purchasing those items at fair market value.

At the Michigan Restaurant Association (MRA) we also view this ban as an infringement on commercial free speech rights.

One proposed "solution" circulating in Lansing dictates that any purchase of logoed glassware must be approved by the state. Restaurants don't need approval from the state every time they buy beer and they shouldn't need it every time they buy beer glasses. Is that what we pay taxes for – to have state employees approve glass orders? Do we need state approval to practice free speech?

Members of the MRA, as you can imagine, are frustrated by the ban. After all, we are the hospitality industry and there is an inherent desire by restaurateurs to maximize the dining experience for every guest.

To the Michigan Restaurant Association and the more than 9,000 bars and restaurants licensed to serve alcohol in Michigan, we simply wish to protect our freedoms. We should be free to purchase these items without government intervention from those who wish to sell it.

--- ### ---