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THREE OF FOUR MICHIGANDERS WANT LOGOED BARWARE LAW CHANGE

LANSING, MI – Results from a recent statewide poll indicate strong support among Michigan residents to reform draconian laws banning the use of logoed barware items such as glassware and napkins at restaurants and bars, according to officials from the Michigan Restaurant Association (MRA) and Michigan Licensed Beverage Association (MLBA).

When asked if they would support or oppose legislation to change state law to allow restaurant and bar owners in Michigan to purchase what are known as “secondary use” items, like glasses or napkins, with the logos of the products they sell (such as Budweiser or Miller), 75 percent of respondents stated they either strongly or somewhat supported the change. Only 9 percent opposed the measure and 14 percent did not take a position one way or the other.

“It’s nice, but not surprising, to see the general public in line with the MRA that the ban on purchasing secondary use items is an unfair and unnecessary infringement on small business owners,” said Brian DeBano, president and CEO of the MRA.

“It’s a commonsense rule change that no one in the industry should oppose,” added Scott Ellis, executive director of the MLBA. “These items are allowed under Federal statute, but they are prohibited from use in an establishment under Michigan’s archaic liquor code and rules.”

While states have widely varying statutes and rules regarding the extent to which secondary use 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.

The Michigan Liquor Control Code Act of 1998, the governing statute in the state, employs a broad interpretation of “aid and assistance,” preventing manufacturers and wholesalers from providing “property of any description” to a restaurant or bar.

Restaurant and bar owners are understandably frustrated with the ban. Jim Holton, owner of Mountain Town Station restaurant and relation to the owner of the Mt. Pleasant Brewing Company, is the current Vice Chairman of the Board of the MRA, as well as a member of the MLBA.

“In some cases and especially with premium items like craft beer, providing a logoed glass adds value to the overall experience for the customer and should be made available. I’m not asking for a handout from a distributor – just the opportunity to respond to the demands of my customers,” Holton said.

MLBA President Rick Swindlehurst added, “We are at a marketing disadvantage as the only state where secondary use is prohibited. By allowing us to use these items, we can promote our Michigan products.”

The poll was conducted by the Marketing Resource Group March 17-23 and has a margin of error of +/-4 percent.

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