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Two states push for relaxed laws for wine orders

BY DEVLIN BARRETT
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — A group of California and New York congressional lawmakers urged state lawmakers Thursday to quickly pass legislation allowing consumers to order wine from small vineyards in other states.

In New York, officials said they would move to offer a bill before the legislative session ends June 23.

The push to open new markets to small wineries comes a week after the Supreme Court struck down laws in New York and Michigan that banned wine shipments from out-of-state producers.

The court ruled 5-4 that such laws were unconstitutional. The fight over who can order wine by mail or over the Internet has now switched to state legislatures around the country.

New York and California members of Congress met Thursday to call for states to open their markets, not shut them down, in response to the court decision.

"Right now if you're a consumer who wants to enjoy wine that's made from small wineries you have a real tough time getting it," said Rep. Mike Thompson, D-Calif.

While California has a global reputation for wine, New York is the third largest producer in the United States and the second largest consumer.

In the past 20 years, the state's wine business has boomed from roughly 30 small wineries to more than 200.

"This is an explosive industry, and it's an issue that needs to be dealt with not only in New York but nationwide,"

said Rep. John "Randy" Kuhl, R-N.Y.

As a state legislator, Kuhl authored a bill that would have loosened New York's restrictions, but Gov. George Pataki vetoed the measure in 1995.

Ten years later, the governor supports the change, but New York's congressional delegation wants to see the state take action, particularly because some states such as New Jersey have decided that if they can't bar out-of-state wine shipments alone, they'll bar all mail-order wine shipments.

"That would be moving backward, that would be regressing," argued Rep. Maurice Hinchey, R-N.Y.

States with similar laws now considered unconstitutional by the Supreme Court will need to take some legislative action in order to properly regulate the sale of alcohol.

"We've fretted and worried and stewed about it, but now we've got to make the state Legislature do what it ought to," said Rep. Louise Slaughter, D-N.Y.

New York, Michigan, and 22 other states barred consumers from directly ordering wine from out of state.

Charles Carrier, a spokesman for New York State's Democratic Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, said lawmakers will take up the issue before the session ends in late June.

Opponents of the change argue loosening state laws will make it easier for underage people to get alcohol and that states have a right to decide what limits they place on alcohol sales.

Wine lovers, said the court's decision will boost Internet sales nationwide, resulting in lower prices and more choices.

Zero: Some say little funding responsible for low numbers

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attend because he had to teach a class.

Mason said he "agreed that the University should be trying to hire more faculty of color."

He added that in past faculty searches within his department, efforts to recruit faculty of color have been unsuccessful because there has been a lack of applicants of color.

"The department did advertise ... especially to reach African-American faculty," he said. "But the fact is, in the past three searches we conducted, only 4 percent of applicants have identified as people of color."

Associate professor Gerald Berk, head of the Political Science Department, said past attempts to recruit faculty of color have failed because the University couldn't match offers from other universities.

"We've had no success, but we've been recruiting like crazy," he said.

Just this year, Berk said, the department attempted to recruit a black

political scientist from the University of California, Los Angeles.

"He had counter offers from University of Washington and UCLA, and the salary was over a third more than we could offer him," he said.

After OSCC presented the awards, rally participants brought out 36 chairs that remained empty, except for a single student who sat in the middle. The exhibition was meant to display the isolation students of color feel in classes where the vast majority of the students are white.

Greg Vincent, vice provost of institutional equity and diversity, was present at the rally and said difficulties in recruiting faculty of color arise from funding constraints.

"I have found that many department chairs want to (recruit faculty of color), but there are issues with funding," he said.

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