

Governor To Select Next Liquor Director

Liquor Official Resigns Amid Accusations of Bourbon Hoarding

AP-The executive director of Oregon's liquor regulatory agency announced his resignation Monday amid a criminal investigation into allegations that he and other senior officials used their positions to divert rare, sought-after bourbons for personal use.

Oregon Liquor and Cannabis Commission Executive Director Steve Marks noted in his resignation letter that Gov. Tina Kotek asked him to step down. He said his resignation is effective at 5 p.m. Wednesday. The resignation letter to the OLCC's board of commissioners was first reported by The Oregonian/OregonLive.

The liquor officials told an internal investigator they were paying for the whiskey, which can cost thousands of dollars a bottle, but they are accused of using their knowledge and connections at the commission to obtain the products. Marks and the other officials denied they resold the whiskeys they obtained.

Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum on Friday announced a criminal investigation into the allegations that senior officials in the state's alcohol and marijuana



Gov. Tina Kotek of Oregon received a letter of resignation from Steve Marks, the executive director of the state's liquor control agency. (Claire Rush/Associated Press)

regulatory agency, which is the state's third-largest revenue generator, violated ethics laws.

The funneling of the top-end whiskey to leaders of the state agency deprived well-heeled whiskey aficionados of the bourbons and violated several Oregon statutes, including one that prohibits public officials from using confidential information for personal gain, according

to the commission's investigation.

The officials purportedly had very limited bottles of top-shelf bourbon routed to a liquor store, often in the Portland suburb of Milwaukie where the commission headquarters is located, and would reserve them for pickup later. They said they used the whiskey for personal consumption or as gifts.

During the OLCC internal probe,

Marks denied that he had violated Oregon ethics laws and state policy. However, he acknowledged that he had received preferential treatment "to some extent" in obtaining the whiskey as a commission employee.

The board of commissioners is appointed by the governor and in turn selects the executive director, according to a commission spokesman.



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