

Booze

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Pricing is still in flux for most distributors, wholesalers and retailers, because it's the first time in 70 years the private parties have been in the liquor business, said Joel Benoliel, Costco senior vice president and chief legal officer.

The state's current charge for a 750-ml bottle of Absolut Citron Vodka: \$22.95. That price includes all fees and taxes.

The distributor's price per bottle for a case of the same product: \$18.27. Then add in an industry-average 20 percent markup for the retailer to cover costs and make a profit — this will vary by store — and a 17 percent fee required under the initiative to recoup lost revenue to the state, a 20.5 percent retail sales tax and a \$2.83 liter tax. Price per bottle: \$33.74.

For 151-proof Bacardi Rum, also in a 750-ml bottle, the price increases from \$26.95 per bottle to \$34.73.

The initiative also requires distributors to raise at least \$150 million in licensing fees for the state, or Washington officials can retroactively charge them for it.

That provision puts wholesalers in an uncomfortable position, having to pad their prices enough to cover that surcharge, said Jan Gee, president of the Washington Food Industry Association, a trade association for small, independent and family-owned grocery stores. But the wholesale taxes and fees fall after the first year.

"None of the retail and consumer prices ever reduce," she said. "They stand the way they are right now, and they're huge."

Some stores are reportedly drafting signs for their liquor shelves to explain the higher

'Sure, big-box stores will be able to negotiate some discounts by ordering in bulk, but the initiative included higher fees to the state for everybody. Prices will go up for everybody'

"Costco is determined we will be competitive, maybe a little lower, than the state was," he said. "We want to buy cheaply, distribute more cheaply, and take a little shorter margin. That's what we do on all our prices."

But he also noted that nobody should be expecting California prices, because Washington has much higher taxes and fees.

Most distributors and retailers have been wary of sharing their new prices in advance

Some stores are reportedly drafting signs for their liquor shelves to explain the higher prices

of the switch Friday, but price lists provided by two distributors to an independent grocery store offer a glimpse into what consumers can expect at many stores.

Small Business Protest



PHOTO BY SUSAN FRIED

On May 25, members of the Community Coalition for Contracts and Jobs (CCCJ), The Black Builders Association, The Truckers Consortium, the A. Philip Randolph Association and other community members entered the offices of the U.S. Small Business Administration to demand equity and fairness in contracting.

prices. And at least 20 contract liquor stores have notified the state that they will be closing altogether — either because larger stores located in the same location enforced "no compete" clauses in their lease or because they elected not to try to compete with big-box stores.

Benoliel of Costco said he understand some retailers may not have the same conclusion that prices will go down, but over time, he said consumers will benefit from the changes.

"We believe, in a competitive marketplace, the consumer wins," he said.

After 37 years in business, Kennett sold the rights to her contract store to someone

else in Naches when the grocery store that owns her building — and obtained a retail liquor license after the initiative passed — enforced a no-compete clause. A steady stream of customers emptied her shelves in the final days leading up to the store's closure on Saturday.

Meanwhile, the Washington Supreme Court has yet to rule over the constitutionality of the measure, after opponents filed suit to overturn it. At issue is whether the initiative violates state rules requiring measures to address only one subject, because it includes a provision to set aside \$10 million for public safety.

Death

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woman who recently moved to Seattle from Albuquerque, N.M., to pursue her dream of becoming a chef died of injuries suffered in an apparently random drive-by shooting near downtown. No arrests have been made.

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Police said they were looking for a man in his 20s who fled on foot

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Fat

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hoods of better or worse health. Since King County is one of the healthiest counties in the state, problems like obesity could be overlooked without more specific data, Drewnowski said.

"Huge social disparities have been buried by looking at data at a very crude level," he said.

Property values are a short hand for all kinds of things, he added. Commute times, proximity to parks and other safe places to exercise, and access to healthy foods may all be related to property values, depending on where you live.

He expects future studies of other cities or counties to find a similar correlation between property values and obesity.

Of course, just moving people into richer neighborhoods won't fix their health problems, he is quick to point out.

The researchers expected to find a difference between the impact on women and men, since other studies have found that men's health is not as closely tied to economics, but the differences found in this research were more dramatic than

Drewnowski expected.

For each \$238,000 drop in property values, obesity rates went up 80 percent among women, and the differences in obesity rates were as gradual as the values, the researchers found.

Those gender differences call for confir-

For each \$238,000 drop in property values, obesity rates went up 80 percent among women

mation by other research and some clarification, said Dr. Dariush Mozaffarian, an associate professor in the Department of Epidemiology at the Harvard School of Public Health, who was not involved in this research.

Mozaffarian said Drewnowski's study made him wonder if there are more obese

women in lower property values or more lean women in higher property values, or both. If obesity is more evenly distributed among men, the difference could be great at both ends of the spectrum.

"If this is confirmed, maybe women are more influenced by the home environ-

ment," Mozaffarian said, adding that he couldn't be sure unless more research was completed.

He'd also like to know what part property values play in the obesity equation. Is it just that nicer homes are usually in more walkable neighborhoods and closer to grocery stores? Or is something else going on?

Drewnowski has some theories of his own. He believes obesity in women is closely connected to financial insecurity. Since property values separate the economically secure from those who worry about where their next meal is coming from, as well as determining if they are safe from crime, the differences between women could be related to stress.

People trying to help others lose weight talk a lot about individual responsibility and willingness to change, but where you live is not necessarily a choice, especially not in Seattle where home values are so high, Drewnowski said.

He also believes that property values measure more than income levels because they can show something about a person over a longer period of time. There may also be another social element, since that obesity rates were affected not just by an individual home value but by all the homes within the equivalent of a 10-minute walk.