

Oregon wineries seek to boost direct-to-consumer shipping limit

BY MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Oregon wineries could increase the amount of wine they send directly to consumers under a bill that's intended to help offset lost tasting room visitors.

The state's wine industry is calling on lawmakers to pass Senate Bill 406, which would allow them to ship five cases of wine per resident a month, up

from the current limit of two cases.

More than 30 years have passed since Oregon created its "direct-to-consumer" wine shipping law and it's due for an update due to restrictions associated with the coronavirus, according to proponents.

"With the pandemic, we are unfortunately seeing a lot of these wine tasting rooms being

shuttered because they cannot carry out wine tastings" under mandates aimed at limiting the spread of illness, said Sen. Floyd Prozanski, D-Eugene, the bill's chief sponsor, during a recent legislative hearing.

The stakeholders in Oregon's wine industry have negotiated a cap of five cases and aren't seeking unlimited shipping, he said.

Postmarks

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"We've all seen it every election cycle," Fagan said at a hearing. "The news media, the county clerks, the secretary of state's office, people in organizations, various people just guessing have to constantly estimate when is the unofficial last day to mail your ballot. It just creates confusion typically on those last five days before an election."

Rep. Dan Rayfield, D-Corvallis, the chief sponsor of HB 2687, said 130 voters in Marion County alone cast ballots that did not count because they were received after the Nov. 3 election.

"That is what this bill is trying to solve," he said.

Under Oregon law, ballots are mailed to voters 14 to 18 days before the election date. Because of uncertainties raised about the reliability of the U.S. Postal Service — although USPS said in a year-end report it delivered 99.89% of mail from voters to elections officials on time — more than the usual number of voters returned their ballots early.

"We can and do encourage people to vote early," Isabela Villareal, who spoke for the Next Up Action Project, said. "But that really does not solve the problem."

"We know of Oregonians who become nonvoters and do not cast their ballots," Villareal,

who spoke for the former Bus Project, said. "They think they are too late to mail their ballots, and dropping off their ballots is a barrier due to mobility, transportation, lack of available drop-off locations, and confusion over mailing deadlines."

Among the organizations endorsing HB 2687 were the League of Women Voters of Oregon and the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon.

Although she did not testify at the hearing, Gov. Kate Brown — herself a former secretary of state — identified election-day postmarks in her state of the state address as one of her three priorities to expand access to voting.

The others are election-day voter registration, which is proposed in House Joint Resolution 11, and use of information from agencies other than the Driver and Motor Vehicle Services Division to register voters automatically. Many Oregonians do not drive or own cars. (That bill was not up for a hearing.)

House Joint Resolution 11, which requires a statewide election, would amend the Oregon Constitution to remove the 20-day deadline that voters put there in 1986. They did so after the attempted Rajneesh takeover in Wasco County, although county and state officials managed to thwart irregular voter registrations.

Oregon had election-day voter registration from 1977

to 1985, when lawmakers changed the deadline to the day before an election.

Also heard by the committee in addition to election-day postmarks and the constitutional change was House Bill 2679, which would allow some 17-year-olds to vote in party primaries if they turn 18 by the general election and if the political party they affiliate with allows them to do so by rule.

Rep. Jack Zika, R-Redmond, asked what would happen to election timelines if the Legislature allows for election-day postmarked ballots to count. Zika won his 2018 primary by just two votes of around 7,500 cast. Rayfield said he would propose a technical amendment to his bill to adjust the timelines.

Yamhill County Clerk Brian Van Bergen, speaking for non-partisan county elections officials, expressed reservations about the proposed changes. Democrats command supermajorities in both chambers, so they can pass them without Republican votes. They can only refer a constitutional change to voters, however.

"We don't think the system is broken," Van Bergen said in response to a question by House Republican Leader Christine Drazan of Canby, who sits on the House Rules Committee. "We think there are opportunities for improvement."

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5 common website design pitfalls to avoid

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A well-designed website is the digital foundation of any successful business.

When a company's website is easy to find, quick to load and seamless to navigate, strangers can transform into brand loyalists in just a few clicks. Unfortunately, the journey from search engine query to shopping cart checkout is fraught with hidden pitfalls that can turn back would-be customers and leave them with a lasting bad impression.

If a website looks good but takes forever to load, or loads quickly but is visually confusing, the quality of the product or service being offered is rendered meaningless. People will simply click back to the search page and choose another option.

Read on to learn more about five of the most common website design mistakes.

1. WEAK SEO

Search engine optimization, or SEO, is all about cooperating with the complex algorithms that control search engines. In order to appear at or near the top of search results that pertain to what a business offers, that business' website must be an accurate reflection of the search terms that were used.

If it isn't, Google will relegate it to the Great Beyond, aka Page 2, where websites languish in obscurity.

A rock solid SEO strategy translates to a higher position on search engine results pages, drawing more website visitors that can be converted into customers.

2. SLOW PAGE LOAD TIMES

Generating clicks to a website is just the first step in the customer acquisition process. As soon as that click occurs, visitors expect lightning-fast



load times. The longer a page takes to load, the higher a website's bounce rate will be. Bounce rates describe how often a user leaves a website without navigating beyond its homepage, and they're a good indicator of a website's overall health.

Fast load times have become so crucial that 40% of people abandon a website that takes more than three seconds to load, and search engines even factor in load times when determining how to rank a site on the search results page.

3. NOT OPTIMIZING FOR MOBILE

A killer SEO strategy and fast load times don't mean a thing if a website is impossible to read and navigate. When a mobile user visits a site designed only for desktop computers, that's exactly what they'll experience.

Since more than half of Internet traffic now comes from mobile devices, business owners who haven't implemented responsive web design can expect sky-high bounce rates.

4. BAD DESIGN

Gone are the days when a website could use generic stock photos and Papyrus as a font and still be taken seriously. Our collective understanding of good design practices has risen significantly since the dawn of the Internet. Even on a subconscious level, people recognize when a web page is too cluttered, too bare or outdated. That recognition immediately translates to skepticism about a brand and what it offers, and that's a bad first impression to make.

5. LACKING A CLEAR CALL-TO-ACTION

A well-built website should be easy to find, load quickly on multiple devices and be visually appealing. When someone searches for a product or service online and the site they enter achieves those metrics, a purchase often follows — but not if it isn't easy to do so. If the path from homepage to transaction isn't clear, visitors will bounce. A clear call-to-action, such as a "Buy Now" or "Contact Us" button, significantly increases conversion

rates.

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