Permanent to-go cocktails

offer Oregon restaurants 'newfound flexibility'

BY SUZANNE ROIG
The Bulletin

When state regulators allowed bars and restaurants to sell cocktails to go, it opened up a whole new avenue for business.

Consumers no longer have to go to a bar to get their favorite mixed drinks. They now can take them to go. On June 8, Oregon lawmakers made to-go cocktails permanent.

The Oregon Liquor Control Commission wanted to help the businesses affected by the government-mandated lockdowns. Bars and restaurants that operate under a full on-premise license with the OLCC — private clubs, bars/restaurants, caterers and public venues with food services — are allowed to sell a cocktail to go and wine with food.

To-go cocktails are now permanently allowed in more than a dozen states around the country. During the pandemic, more than 30 states had allowed cocktails to go as a temporary measure.

In Central Oregon, summer tourism is in full swing, and some consumers are shifting their purchases to takeout, rather than dine-in consumption of food and beverages, according to the industry.

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"We see the newfound flexibility as a small benefit that will grow exponentially in the years ahead."

— Jason Brandt, Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association

What does Oregon allow now?

Under the OLCC rules, cocktails to go are single-serving wine and distilled spirits and a mixer, and cannot contain more than 3 ounces of alcohol.

Only two cocktails can be sold to go with a "substantial food item," according to the OLCC website.

The cocktails also must be single serving in a container with a lid that includes a seal designed to make it known when the seal has been removed or broken.

$15 wage becoming the norm as employers struggle to fill jobs

BY CHRISTOPHER RUGABER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The signs and banners are dotted along suburban commercial strips and hanging in shop windows and restaurants, evidence of a new desperation among America's service-industry employers: "Now Hiring, $15 an hour."

It is hardly the official federal minimum wage — at $7.25, that level hasn't been raised since 2009 — but for many lower-skilled workers, $15 an hour has increasingly become a reality.

Businesses, particularly in the restaurant, retail and travel industries, have been offering a $15 wage to try to fill enough jobs to meet surging demand from consumers, millions of whom are now spending freely after a year in lockdown. And many of the unemployed, buoyed by stimulus checks and expanded jobless aid, feel able to hold out for higher pay.

The change since the pandemic has been swift. For years, and notably in the 2020 presidential race, labor advocates had trumpeted $15 an hour as a wage that would finally allow low-paid workers to afford basic necessities and narrow inequality. It struck many as a long-term goal.

Now, many staffing companies say $15 an hour is the level that many businesses must pay to fill their jobs.

"That number is not a coincidence," said Aaron Sojourner, an economist at the University of Minnesota. "It's the number that those activists and workers put on the table 10 years ago and built a movement towards."

Even so, millions of Americans are still earning less than $15 an hour. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office calculates that even by 2025, roughly 17 million workers will remain below that level.

Yet at ZipRecruiter, the number of job postings on the site that are advertising $15 an hour has more than doubled since 2019, said Julia Pollak, labor economist for the company. The proportion of jobs that offer 401(k) retirement accounts, flexible scheduling, signing bonuses and other benefits has risen, too.

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Charles Rex Arbogast/AP

Steven Dyme, owner of Flowers for Dreams, says the $15 minimum wage in Chicago made it much easier to staff up when the economy reopened this spring and demand for flowers, particularly for weddings, soared.