2019 Alcohol Bills Passed and Didn’t

MONTGOMERY, Ala. - Alabamians won’t be able to get wine delivered to their homes anytime soon, but wet counties and municipalities can now have Sunday sales without going through the Legislature.

There were several alcohol-related bills in the 2019 legislative session that ended last month. Here’s what passed and what didn’t.

**Sunday Sales for Wet Counties and Municipalities**

Legislation sponsored by Rep. Reed Ingram, R-Mathews, allows local county commissions or municipalities within a wet county to permit and regulate Sunday sales for alcohol through resolutions or ballot referendums without first having to go through the Legislature.

Reed said he saw this as an economic development issue for counties and municipalities. There are now 42 wet counties in the state, according to the Alabama Alcoholic Beverage Control Board.

“It gives you three ways of doing it now,” Reed told Alabama Daily News. “You can do it through a vote of the people, they can vote it through on their city council or bring it back to [the legislature] and let us make the decision. It just gives more flexibility for those counties that are seeing big box stores come there and is going in to make the process move a little faster.”

House Bill 168 has been signed by Gov. Kay Ivey.

**Craft breweries and entertainment districts**

Senate Bill 276, sponsored by Rodger Smitherman, D-Birmingham, and Neil Rafferty, D-Birmingham, allows craft breweries and or businesses that have an in-house tap room to be included in participating in an entertainment district. In specified entertainment districts, patrons are allowed to carry open drinks.

It has been sent to the governor for signature.

**Infused Spirits**

House Bill 46 from Rep. Chris England, allows on-premise retail licensed bars to produce, store and sell infused products made from distilled spirits for on-site consumption.

It has been sent to the governor.

**Local legislation**

The city of Oxford will now have a local referendum to see if residents want to allow Sunday alcohol sales.

Rep. K. L. Brown, R-Jacksonville, said because Oxford is close to the Talladega Superspeedway, which attracts tourists, city council wanted to see local legislation passed concerning Sunday sales.

“We have people from all over the world come in here so I have heard some displeasure from people about not being able to buy beer after the race and I think the big box stores have also pushed this matter as well,” Brown said. “Because if people buy groceries on Sunday they can just go ahead and buy their beer at the Publix or Sam’s when they’re shopping as well.”

Rep. Lynn Greer, R-Rogersville, sponsored a bill to allow the town of Lexington in Lauderdale County to have alcohol sales every day of the week except for Sundays. Voters in Lexington first have to approve this measure which will be on the ballot during the next municipal election.

A bill from Rep. Bobby Singleton, D-Greensboro, now allows licensed retailers in the city of Moundville in Hale County to sell draft or keg beer, as well as malt beverages. It has been signed by the governor.

The cities of Mountain Brook and Hoover will now be able to start selling alcohol on Sunday at 10 a.m. thanks to bills from Sen. Jabo Waggoner, R-Birmingham. The governor has signed both.

**What didn’t pass**

**Wine Shipment**

Rep. Terri Collins, R-Decatur, sponsored a bill, HB 350, that would allow people to ship wine directly to their homes.

It was passed by the House but never made it to the Senate floor after Sen. Waggoner issued a resolution to create a task force to study wine shipments in the state. Collins told Alabama Daily News that the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board withdrew its support from her bill once that resolution was passed.

Collins said that she was irritated to see her bill die but plans to sponsor it every year until it passes.

“It was very frustrating to see the support in the House and then not get it even heard in the Senate,” Collins said. “I accepted a compromise from the ABC and thought I had their support which they then withdrew. I thought this was a very good bill and I made a lot of compromises that I don’t plan on making next year when I bring this bill back up again.”

Some of the compromises Collins accepted changed the limit of cases monthly from two cases per person to one case per household and added a $200 application fee for the manufactures and a $50 reapplication fee.

“Our alcohol laws are just so bizarre in this state,” Collins said. “They are piecemealed together, so I was extremely disappointed to see my bill fail when I had worked so hard to accept so many amendments and compromises from people in order to make it work.”

**Bills from Nordgren**

Multiple alcohol-related bills from Rep. Becky Nordgren, R-Gadsden, died during the session.

House Bill 151 would have removed the requirement that a brewpub has to be located in a historical or economically distressed area and operate a restaurant or otherwise provide food. It would also increase the limit on how much beer a brewpub may produce annually.

House Bill 542 would have allowed places with on-site tasting rooms to not only sell their own alcoholic beverages they make on-site but also sell other beverages made by manufacturers in the state.