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**SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS, WINE SELLERS AND OTHERS RALLY
AT STATE CAPITOL TO STOP WINE SALES IN GROCERY STORES
Opponents of the Proposal Call on State Legislature to Reject Governor's Plan**

ALBANY, NY February 24, 2010 – Small business owners, independent wine sellers and union workers from around New York converged on Albany today to urge the State Legislature to reject Governor Paterson's plan to legalize the sale of wine in every grocery store, gas station, deli, and bodega in the state.

If implemented, this change would devastate many small businesses and cost the state thousands of valuable jobs. Additionally, the sale of wine in every store where beer is now available would give teenagers greater access to alcohol – resulting in a heightened risk of underage drinking and fatal drunk driving accidents.

Jeff Saunders, president of the Retailers Alliance and founder of the Last Store on Main Street Coalition, said, "This change would close more than 1,000 small businesses, which would result in the loss of more than 4,500 valuable jobs of hardworking New Yorkers. If this plan goes into effect, Big Box stores will benefit greatly, while one of the last small businesses in the state will suffer. That is bad for New York and bad for our economy. The Legislature must stop this proposal now."

According to an economic impact study completed for the industry prior to the collapse of the state's economy, nearly 40 percent of the wine stores in the state would be forced out of business if the sale of wine were legalized in every deli, corner store, gas station, bodega and grocery store in New York. As a result, more than 4,500 people would be forced out of work in the worst economy the state has experienced in generations.

"New Yorkers know that killing small businesses across the state and the jobs they provide is just a bad idea in this economic climate," said Stefan Kalogridis, president of the New York State Liquor Store Association. "Supermarkets will not create one new job just because they can stock a different product on their shelves. Instead, they will put thousands of New Yorkers out of work while they stuff more money in their back pockets."

In addition to the economic toll, legalizing the sale of wine in thousands of new outlets around the state would carry significant social costs. In its September 30th report, the Law Revision Commission determined that "the SLA is unable to make prevention of underage drinking a statewide priority" and noted that it has just 38 enforcement officials dealing with 70,000 license holders.

Law enforcement agencies across the state, along with substance abuse experts, have opposed legalizing the sale of wine because they believe it will lead to an increase in underage drinking. New York State spends \$3.2 billion annually to deal with the impact of underage drinking currently, according to the State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services.

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“The handful of SLA officials policing thousands of license holders is little more than a band-aid on a \$3.2 billion problem. This idea is not only dangerous to our young people; it’s costly to New York taxpayers,” said Michael Correra, a Coalition leader and executive director of the Metropolitan Package Store Association. “New York should be doing more to fight underage drinking and job loss. Governor Paterson’s proposal is one idea that should be tossed on the trash heap for good.”

In addition to the law enforcement community and store owners, the opposition to the proposal includes the National Federation of Independent Business, the Teamsters Joint Council 16, the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU), UFCW Local 1500, UFCW Local 2D, and nearly 100 small and mid-sized wineries from around the state. The Sullivan County Legislature, the Erie County Legislature, and the Buffalo Common Council have all passed resolutions in opposition of the Governor’s plan.

No state in more than 28 years has approved legislation legalizing the sale of wine in grocery stores, with Kentucky, Tennessee and Colorado joining New York in the last year in rejecting efforts by Big Box stores to take over this business. Massachusetts voters rejected the idea in a referendum in 2008.

“This proposal is a dangerous idea that will only lead to an increase in underage drinking and drunk driving deaths and put more New Yorkers out of jobs,” said Saunders. “The Governor should be seeking ways to eliminate underage drinking and job loss rather than encourage it. We are confident the State Legislature will reject this bad plan as they did last year.”

The Last Store on Main Street Coalition is a group of small business advocates, local wine store owners and wholesalers working together to defeat Governor Paterson’s reckless plan to legalize wine sales in every corner store, mini-mart, deli, bodega, grocery store and supermarket in New York.

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