



Press Release...

From State Representative Sara Feigenholtz

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Business Owners/ Industry leaders Toast the benefits of Illinois' Culinary and Hospitality Modernization Act After One Year

CHICAGO - Restaurant and bar owners are in the business of helping their customers celebrate but today, a handful of business owners gathered with culinary industry and state leaders to do the celebrating.

This week marks the one-year anniversary since Illinois' Culinary and Hospitality Modernization Act took affect that not only brought "Happy Hour" back to Illinois but also strengthened the industry's training standards.

"Over the past year, businesses throughout the state – from bar/restaurants and hotels to celebrity chefs, craft brewers, and neighborhood taverns – have benefited from the additional flexibility and opportunity that the Culinary and Hospitality Modernization Act offers," said Sam Toia, President & CEO of the Illinois Restaurant Association. "Businesses can now use additional marketing tools and promotions – including food and wine pairings, happy hours, meal packages, and infusions – to help grow their businesses and attract new customers."

The legislation modernized Illinois' robust culinary and hospitality industry by increasing training standards for industry workers and permitting temporary price changes and other marketing tools allowing the industry to grow and better compete with other regional markets.

"When we passed this legislation last summer, we did it to eliminate a clear disadvantage for one of the greatest culinary tourism destinations in the country. Restaurants were unable to pair wine with food or offer free food as part of meal packages. Over the past year, these small business owners have been able to better market themselves and take advantage of a better-trained workforce," said State Rep. Sara Feigenholtz who helped author the bill.

The bill has provided a variety of benefits industry wide with many businesses praising the freedom and flexibility the new laws provide:

“The new law has provided an essential tool for industry by allowing us to market party packages and event spaces without the fear of being in violation of state liquor laws. We know for a fact that our events have increased because of the ability to market,” said Sam Sanchez, Owner of John Barleycorn.

“The Happy Hour Law has been a “Win, Win, Win” for all three tiers of our industry & created excitement for the hospitality industry. Brewers, Distillers & Wineries have been able to create new marketing programs, retail licensees have been able to create more excitement & visits to their establishments and consumers have an additional reason to relax & unwind after a day at work. Any additional sales provided by this law also benefit the State of IL, Cook County & the City of Chicago in additional tax revenue,” said Jim Doney, President of Chicago Beverage Systems of Reyes Holdings LLC.

“The Happy Hour Law has been a game-changer for IRMA’s many restaurant members. It has been a great way to enhance business during slow hours and help employees earn extra cash. Everyone wins when elected officials pass common sense legislation that drives more customers to neighborhood businesses and increases the earning power of employees. We have Rep. Sara Feigenholtz and her colleagues in the General Assembly to thank for that,” – said Rob Karr, President & CEO Illinois Retail Merchants Association.

“Even with the repeal of the prohibition on happy hour last year, Illinois still has some of the strictest happy hour laws in the country. The new happy hour law continues to protect consumers, while giving our retail customers the tools to construct a successful business. The newfound flexibility has allowed our retail customers to flourish,” said Stephanie Vojas, Vice President of Government Relations Associated Beer Distributors of Illinois.

Breaking down Illinois’ Culinary and Hospitality Modernization Act

- Maintains home rule jurisdiction allowing local units of government to keep local control of alcohol related ordinances.
- Maintains prohibition on 2 for 1 sale of alcoholic drinks.
- Maintains prohibition on increasing the volume of alcohol in a drink without proportionally increasing the price.
- Makes Illinois the first state to require mandatory Beverage Alcohol Sellers and Servers Education and Training (BASSET) for all alcohol servers in Illinois.
- Streamlines the process for hotels to manage and pursue a single liquor license on premises owned and operated by the hotel.
- Defines and permits meal packages, entertainment packages, and party packages, including wristband deals.
- Permits discounted drinks during a specified time period of the day, with stipulations on the following:
 - Drinks may not be discounted for more than 4 hours per day and not more than 15 hours per week.
 - Notice of the discount of alcohol drinks must be made publicly available 7 days prior to the specified time.
 - The drink may not be discounted between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and the licensed premise's closing hour.
 - The price of alcoholic drinks must not be changed during the time that it is discounted.

In 2015, Illinois restaurants supported more than 529,000 jobs or 9% of Illinois’ workforce. This year alone, restaurants in Illinois are projected to generate more than \$23 billion in sales.

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