

**From:** Jim Harrison  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 22, 2015

**Subject:** Fortified Wines

Representative Head and members of the committee,

Thank you for reviewing the fortified wine proposal contained in S.138. As I indicated earlier to the committee, we support allowing second class licensees with a permit to sell fortified wines. We are ok with the Senate version, but prefer the Senate Economic Development proposal that would allow the products to be sold by our existing network of wine distributors. The tax on fortified wine would remain significantly higher than regular wine. It is simpler, will lead to better variety and delivery systems are already in place.

One of our long term members interested in offering fortified wines to their customers is Gillingham's in Woodstock. In a note to us yesterday, co-owner Jireh Billings indicated "We think we would do the best job if the distribution went through our existing wine distributors. They already have established relationships with the producers which will give us the greatest selection."

Other control states, like Vermont, that have these products now sold through private wholesalers include: Iowa, Maine, Michigan, Ohio, Oregon and North Carolina (NC allows both private and the state system).

The Senate action on the bill is a good step forward. Privatizing the sale of this small category would be an even better step.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jim

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Jim Harrison  
Vermont Retail & Grocers Association