



JULIE LASSA

STATE SENATOR

Testimony on Senate Bill 226
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Small Business, and Tourism
Wednesday, September 2, 2015
201 Southeast

Chairman Moulton and committee members, thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 226, which I have introduced on behalf of a small business in my district. This is a simple and narrowly crafted bill that would permit businesses whose facilities offer both indoor golf driving range lanes and batting cages to obtain a Class "B" license to sell fermented malt beverages (beer) while allowing unaccompanied underage persons to be on the premise.

Wisconsin state statutes already allow certain types of sporting and recreation-related facilities to sell beer and/or liquor while permitting an underage individual to be on the premise without his or her parent, guardian, or spouse who is at least 21 years of age. These facilities are stadiums, outdoor volleyball courts, regularly established athletic fields, outdoor volleyball courts, bowling centers, billiards centers, curling clubs, private soccer clubs, private tennis clubs, golf courses and clubhouses, and indoor golf simulator facilities. Adding facilities with both indoor golf driving ranges and batting cages to this list by allowing them to sell beer will permit small businesses, such as Blaser's in Wisconsin Rapids, to compete on a level playing field. It will also enable these businesses to expand their clientele and host special events like tournaments and parties.

SB 226 has bi-partisan support in its co-sponsorship, and I hope you will give it your support as well. I am happy to be joined today by Shane Blaser, the owner and operator of Blaser's Pitch and Hit in Wisconsin Rapids, who is here to discuss some of the real-world implications of this legislation.



I would like to thank Senator Lassa and the other co-sponsors of Senate Bill 226. I especially want to thank Chairman Moulton and the other committee members for giving this bill an opportunity to go through the process and allowing me to speak at this public hearing.

As Senator Lassa has testified this bill it is very narrow in scope but can have a large impact on my family's small business. It will allow our indoor golf driving range and batting cage facility to be included in the list of other sporting and recreation related facilities that are currently allowed to sell beer.

Specifically, it will allow us to have another revenue source outside of our core business and put me on a level playing field with other similar businesses. Most sporting facilities depend on leagues for income such as bowling and golf. The latest craze is a game called Cornhole which involves throwing a bag of corn through a hole in a slanted board. There already are numerous outdoor bar leagues and tournaments held at events throughout the state. Our facility is large enough to accommodate running an indoor league alongside our regular business and being able to sell beer is just as essential to my business as it is to other sporting and recreation related facilities who are currently allowed to sell it under state statute. Along with that, several organizations have inquired about holding fundraising events along with Cornhole tournaments over the winter months at my complex. Being able to sell beer to patrons at this type of special event, as well as during regular business hours, would allow me to attract additional business.

Thank you for listening and giving your time. I would appreciate your support. Thank you.

Committee Members:

This is to express our strong support for Senate Bill 212 scheduled for a hearing tomorrow, Wednesday, September 2, 2015. Because of our location on the border of Wisconsin and Minnesota, we believe the passage of this bill is necessary for the continued success of our Wisconsin winery business. We are also in support of Senate Bill 223 and Senate Bill 226.

We are the owners of Villa Bellezza Winery and Vineyards, located on Great River Road in Pepin, Wisconsin. Pepin is on the western border of Wisconsin in the scenic Lake Pepin area of the Mississippi River. Our winery is one of the largest wineries in Wisconsin with an annual production of over 5,000 cases / 60,000 bottles. And, although our winery opened just 3 years ago, we attract over 30,000 visitors each year.

In order for our business to continue to be successful, we must continue to increase traffic to our front door. Requiring Wisconsin tasting rooms to close at 9 PM is creating a competitive disadvantage for Villa Bellezza and all Wisconsin wineries. Our Minnesota winery neighbors, just across the river and border, are able to remain open until 12 midnight and later. This allows Minnesota wineries to consider opening full service restaurants with standard service hours -- an addition that helps support a year round, rather than seasonal business. Later tasting room closing times also create opportunities to schedule evening promotions to increase traffic -- public special ticketed events like dinners, dances, concerts, holiday celebrations or even movies after dark. Without competitive extended hours, Wisconsin wineries are limited to daytime promotions to bring more visitors to their front doors.

Villa Bellezza is located in the new "Upper Mississippi River Valley" American Viticultural Area (AVA), -- now the largest viticultural area in the world. This wine area designation confirms great potential for developing more vineyards and wineries along this beautiful Mississippi River valley. If Wisconsin does not work to level the playing field, winery development will move to the Minnesota side of the Mississippi and revenues gained from this fast growing winery tourism industry will go to Minnesota as well.

On the day of this important hearing, all Wisconsin wineries are in their busiest season of harvest and crush. If not for this unfortunate timing, many more owners like us would be attending this hearing to express our support for these bills personally. Vote "Yes" for 212 and make sure that Wisconsin wins its Midwest state share of wine industry revenues. Vote "Yes" to also ensure Wisconsin claims its development share in "The Upper Mississippi River Valley" AVA -- an exciting new wine region.

Julianne and Derick Dahlen
Villa Bellezza Winery and Vineyards
Pepin, WI

715-442-2424
612-803-0025 cell
www.villabellezza.com



September 1, 2015

TO: Members of the Agriculture, Small Business and Tourism Committee

My family currently owns Fawn Creek Winery located in Wisconsin Dells. In five years, we have grown our business from a no-employees-except-family-members operation producing 18,000 bottles of wine in 2011 to a business employing 34 part-time persons and producing 100,000 bottles of wine in 2015.

We are asking you to support Senate Bill 212, Senate Bill 223 and Senate Bill 226. These bills would help the Wisconsin wine industry immensely.

I understand that our group does not have the clout of the Tavern League or the Distribution Lobby but our business is growing and is an important part of the small-business/tourism markets. We deserve your support.

Wisconsin's motto of "Open for Business" will be tested with this vote. A "No" vote on these bills would indicate to me that the State is only "open for business" for a chosen few.

Respectfully submitted,

Dan Hanson on behalf of Fawn Creek Winery Ownership Group

Jim Gerich
Dan & Sally Haberkorn
Dan & Diana Hanson
Susan Hanson-Marx