



**GOVERNOR'S
TASK FORCE
ON THE STUDY OF
KENTUCKY'S
ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL LAWS**

PUBLIC FORUMS



Public Forums

Under the direction of Public Protection Cabinet (PPC) Secretary Bob Vance, the task force scheduled forums for the purpose of inviting public input. Locations central to eastern, northern, western and central Kentucky were selected and information about the forums was posted on the Public Protection Cabinet's website. In addition, the Governor's Office of Field Services in the Department for Local Government notified local officials, organizations and residents of each forum's location, date and time, and encouraged their participation.

Public Forum
Comment—*Concern that the proposed combo license will “blur the lines” and may open door to all licenses non-quota.*

Secretary Vance, PPC and Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) staff and several task force members attended each of the forums. Attendance varied at each location and included legislators, local elected officials, local alcoholic beverage administrators, representatives of substance abuse prevention programs, industry representatives and interested citizens.

The comments from the audiences in Somerset, Highland Heights and Madisonville generally followed similar thoughts and suggestions. Some of those included:

- Number of license types should be streamlined.
- Need for a support system and training for local administrators.
- Praise for the Server Training in Alcohol Regulations (STAR) training program along with mandated responsible beverage server training.
- Need for training, particularly for those applying for event-type licenses that allow volunteers to sell alcohol.
- Concern about the responsible sale of alcohol in grocery stores, particularly as it relates to the use of self-checkout.
- Concern about the cost of local option elections to cities/counties.
- Public safety concerns in general, especially sale to minors; also concerns about packaging that closely resembles energy drinks or sodas; also large containers “alco-pops,” which appeal to youth.
- A request to lower the percentage requirement of alcohol versus food sales in restaurants.
- Question about whether the cabinet has considered reducing the required number of seats in restaurants.
- Concern that the proposed combo license will “blur the lines” and may open door to all licenses non-quota.
- Question about the rationale of limiting some clubs, such as VFW, to beer license only.
- Request that the task force consider the current distinction between classes of cities, which creates mass confusion; laws need to be simplified.
- Request that the task force recommend more officers.



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In Louisville, the concerns and issues somewhat mirrored those from the other three forums, but there were also issues specific to Louisville and Jefferson County that were shared with the task force members present.

This forum was heavily attended by residents, particularly from the Shawnee neighborhood, and metro-council members and staff. It should be noted that some of the issues listed below are local issues over which the state has no control.

- Support economic development, but there are far too many licenses issued; stores keep opening and only the names change. There is an overconcentration of liquor establishments in Louisville.
- Powell community is concerned about underage drinking.
- More control is needed at the local level.
- Residents have started a petition to get rid of so many corner liquor stores.
- The problem is density; a moist option in malt beverages is needed – recommends only with food sales.
- Only one license causes problems; suggest separate beer and wine licenses.
- Number of violations of licensees should be considered and penalties should be strengthened; most violators get a slap on the wrist.
- Licenses are issued without regard to proximity to schools and child care centers.
- Too many liquor stores in or near residential areas; hours of operation should be limited.
- Local ABC needs more funding.
- Hotline operators do not understand rules, need better training.
- Need to simplify or reduce types of licenses; need to revisit applicable laws.
- Belief that there is a direct correlation between the number of liquor stores and reported incidents of violence.
- Need assurance that local options remain intact.
- Concern that ABC is not sensitive to local concerns.

Public Forum

Concern—Number of violations of licensees should be considered and penalties should be strengthened.

Representative Reginald Meeks was the final commenter at the Louisville forum. He thanked the task force for coming to Louisville and for the opportunity to speak. He said that the liquor industry is important, but noted that one would not find the establishments in Louisville on the Bourbon Trail (due to the quality of the liquor stores).

Representative Meeks commented that Jefferson County is held to a different standard than the rest of the state, that the ratio of package store licenses and “by-the-drink” licenses to residents is 1 per 1,500 in Jefferson



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County compared to 1 per 2,300 for “by-the-drink” licenses and 2,500 for package store licenses for the rest of the state, which has become a quality of life issue for Jefferson County residents. He stated that, despite the high number of liquor businesses, Jefferson County has 200-plus vacant licenses. He asked the task force to consider eliminating 300 licenses to “stop the bleeding” and the “downward spiral” in Jefferson County communities, and asked the task force to keep the people informed.

Task Force Chair Robert Vance told attendees at all four forums that their comments would be captured and included in the final task force report so that future groups that meet on alcoholic beverage control laws would be able to incorporate the relevant parts into those discussions.