

By [Jaclyn Cosgrove](#) / August 30, 2017

California wants to party until 4 a.m.

The last call for alcohol in Los Angeles has long been 2 a.m., but proposed legislation in the state Assembly could change that.

Senate Bill 384 would allow cities to extend the hours that bars, nightclubs and restaurants could sell alcohol to as late as 4 a.m. The bill doesn't apply to liquor stores.

Supporters of the bill argue that Los Angeles is behind the times – the largest city in America with a cutoff time at 2 a.m. for alcohol – and the legislation would allow the city to improve nightlife and support tourism.



The Abbey is one of many local nightlife venues that could benefit from later hours, but some are worried about adverse effects to public health and safety. (photo courtesy of The Abbey Food and Bar)

New York City, Chicago, Washington D.C., Las Vegas and Atlanta are among several U.S. cities with late-night service hours beyond 2 a.m. Additionally, 20 states allow alcohol sales after 2 a.m.

“As the Assembly member representing downtown Los Angeles, I am proud to be a principal co-author of SB 384, which will allow communities like ours to set their own alcohol beverage ‘closing times,’” Assemblyman Miguel Santiago said at a recent press conference. “This proposal is a great step forward for our city and others across the state that thrive on evening

entertainment.”

But opponents of SB 384 – including Los Angeles City Councilman Paul Koretz, 5th District – say extending the hours that alcohol can be sold to 4 a.m. will have a significant public health impact on the city, with more drunk drivers on highways and more lives lost to alcohol.

Koretz introduced a resolution Aug. 22 in opposition to the bill, but the council hasn't yet voted on it. Koretz said he doesn't know how supportive his fellow council members will be.

“I suspect some council members will be more focused on the potential revenue, and some will be more focused on the safety side of it, as I am,” Koretz said. “I'm sure the restaurant, bar and nightclub owners will be overwhelmingly in support of this, but I think the issue of safety is really the primary concern, and that's really our primary job. If we can't try to keep our residents alive, I don't know what we're doing here.”

SB 384 was approved by the Senate in late May with a vote of 27-9.

The bill is pending in the Assembly Appropriations Committee, which has until Friday, Sept. 1, to vote on SB 384. If approved, the bill could then be considered by the full Assembly.

Over the past few months, SB 384 has garnered support from several local and state organizations, including the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, the West Hollywood Chamber of Commerce and the California Music and Culture Association, along with support from San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee.

Jessica Lall, president and CEO of the Central City Association, said during a recent press conference that SB 384 would allow local governments to decide if responsible nightclubs, bars and restaurants in specific areas zoned for late-night entertainment, like downtown Los Angeles, could remain open later.

“People could choose to stay later in downtown restaurants and venues. They would know that their late-night entertainment options are safe places. And there would be more jobs, more local revenues and more chances for downtown businesses to thrive,” Lall said. “... L.A. would be a stronger competitor for new conventions, trade shows and tourists.”

David Cooley, owner of The Chapel and The Abbey Food & Bar in West Hollywood, said that ridesharing companies and improvements in public transportation have changed how people go out in Los Angeles.

“People are safer and more responsible with their transportation choices but our laws regulating alcohol service have not kept up with the global nightlife industry,” Cooley said. “By extending service hours, we’ll be able to compete with nightlife destinations all over the world and bring more money back to our businesses, our employees and our local communities.”

However, Bruce Lee Livingston, executive director and CEO of the California-based public health organization Alcohol Justice, said SB 384 would create “party districts,” namely in Hollywood and in downtown L.A, creating noisy neighborhoods and problems for the people who live there. Public health research is clear on the negative impact that extending alcohol sales hours can have, Livingston said.

For example, the Community Preventive Services Task Force – whose members are appointed by the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – found that increasing alcohol sales by two or more hours increases the likelihood of vehicle crash injuries, emergency room admissions and alcohol-related assault and injury.

“We already have a serious alcohol consumption and harm problem in California,” Livingston said. “10,500 people are estimated to die from alcohol-related causes every year in California. We don’t need to be encouraging more consumption at binge drinking levels in the middle of the night.”