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Scott Wiener to push for 4 a.m. SF, Oakland bar closures for third time

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A file photo from 2017 shows Mark Leno, Scott Wiener, Oasis host Heklina, and Honey Mahogany, who were discussing a bill that would allow bars to stay open until 4 a.m.

Photo: Liz Hafalla, The Chronicle

An effort to extend bar closing times in nine California cities to 4 a.m. is making another comeback.

State Sen. Scott Wiener, D-San Francisco, will reintroduce on Tuesday the Let Our Communities Adjust Late-Night Act, which would allow later alcohol sales.

The bill would encompass San Francisco, Oakland, Los Angeles, Sacramento, West Hollywood, and Long Beach, Coachella, Cathedral City, and Palm Springs, where local officials have expressed interest in participating in a five-year pilot program.

Cities would create their own rules, including where sales to 4 a.m. are allowed and how often.

Wiener said the bill will boost small businesses and add cultural vibrancy.

“Nightlife is very important in our cities,” Wiener said. “We have this rigid, 100-year-old rule in California that all alcohol sales shall end by 2 a.m., whether you’re in downtown San Francisco or Los Angeles or in a small farm town.”

A version of the bill earlier this year was passed by the state legislature but [vetoed by Gov. Jerry Brown](#), who said the bill would add “two more hours of mayhem” and increase drunk driving.

Wiener said there isn’t data that shows an increase in drunk driving, and that around half of U.S. states already allow alcohol sales after 2 a.m.

“Transportation has changed, even in suburban areas,” said Wiener. “People can get a rideshare.”

Brown leaves office next month and will be succeeded by Gavin Newsom, who previously founded the San Francisco wine store PlumpJack, now a group of wineries, restaurants, bars and hotels.

Supporters of the bill include San Francisco Travel, the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, the West Hollywood Chamber of Commerce, and ride-hailing companies Uber and Lyft, which stand to see an increase in late-night business.

San Francisco Mayor London Breed supported the earlier bill this year, along with Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti.

“Every community has its own needs, and cities should be able to make informed decisions about what nightlife hours make sense for residents, visitors, and neighborhoods,” Garcetti said in a statement. “This bill would give us an opportunity to look more closely at what is best for public safety and our economy, and to make those choices locally.”

Opponents have included advocacy groups Alcohol Justice and California Alcohol Policy Alliance.

If passed, the bill would begin the five-year pilot program in the nine cities on Jan. 1, 2022. Wiener said the pilot could potentially be pushed up to start on Jan. 1, 2021. After five years, the state legislature would have to act to make the changes permanent.

The first hearing on the bill is expected to be held in March or April, said Wiener.

“These bars and nightclubs are overwhelmingly small businesses,” Wiener said. “An extra two hours could be the difference between surviving and not surviving.”

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