

# Keep Bars Open Later In California: Debate Over 'Last Call Bill'

Existing laws prohibit the sale of alcohol between 2 a.m. and 6 a.m., but Senate Bill 58 aims to change that.

By [Toni McAllister, Patch Staff](#)

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Ten cities could participate in a five-year pilot program whereby bars within city limits could stay open later. (Shutterstock)

**BAY AREA, CA** — A bill that would allow bars to stay open until later in select California cities is taking some heat despite moving through the legislative process.

The so-called "Last Call Bill," otherwise known as [SB 58](#), has faced little pushback this year in the state capitol since being introduced Dec. 17 by Sen. Scott Wiener (D-San Francisco).

The bill calls for allowing 10 cities to participate in a five-year pilot program whereby bars within city limits could stay open later than the current 2 a.m. closing. The cities would have the option of participating — or not. Cathedral City, Coachella, Fresno, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Oakland, Palm Springs, Sacramento, San Francisco and West Hollywood are the proposed pilot cities.

Existing laws prohibit the sale of alcohol between 2 a.m. and 6 a.m.

Wiener said cities should have flexibility when it comes to nightlife. The bill supports culture, music, tourism, small businesses and middle class jobs, Wiener has argued.

"California's current rigid, outdated, blanket 2 a.m. closing time no longer makes sense," Wiener said earlier this year when the bill passed the Senate. "Nightlife is so important for the culture and economy of our cities. Our entire state will benefit from allowing cities the flexibility to extend their nightlife if they see fit."

**This week, the Los Angeles City Council felt otherwise. It voted 10-2 to pass a resolution opposing the bill.**

**"This is a bill that puts not only consumers of alcohol in danger but all the innocent bystanders that will suffer if it passes," said L.A. City Councilman Paul Koretz, who authored the resolution.**

**Friday, SB 58 passed out of the Assembly Appropriations Committee with an amendment: The language in Wiener's bill included a 4 a.m. closing time, however the committee decided on 3 a.m. instead — without the**

**Senator's knowledge, according to his office. The bill, as amended, now goes to the full Assembly for a vote; if it passes, it will go to the full Senate.**

In Alameda County, which encompasses two of the pilot cities — San Francisco and Oakland — there has been vocal opposition from Supervisor Nate Miley, whose District 4 includes Oakland. On Aug. 16, he penned an op-ed strongly opposing the bill. Titled "The 4 a.m. bar-closing bill would be bad for Oakland," his piece appeared in [the San Francisco Chronicle](#).

**Wiener claims his bill "would invigorate local economies in California and fulfill the community's desire for a more robust nightlife. Unfortunately, this bill is detrimental to our communities because it lacks foresight, includes insufficient accountability, and will cost Oakland and Alameda County more lives and money than we can afford," Miley wrote.**

**One July 2019 study** from the Alcohol Research Group — published by Alcohol Justice & the California Alcohol Policy Alliance — supports the view that SB 58 would be cost prohibitive. The report found that if L.A. bars stayed open until 4 a.m., the cost to society would outweigh the benefits by a factor of 2.3 to 1, totaling \$266.5 million to \$1.066 billion "net social harm" to the L.A. area.

The numbers are highly debatable, but there's been time for research. Wiener introduced legislation proposing to extend bar hours back in 2017 with SB 384, which was defeated, and then again in 2018 with SB 905, which made it to then Gov. Jerry Brown's desk, where it was vetoed.

Wiener has had support for a law change from groups like San Francisco Travel, the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, the West Hollywood Chamber of Commerce, the San Francisco Bar Alliance, the California Music and Culture Association, the Valley Industry and Commerce Association, CalTravel, Lyft and Uber.

Many who oppose the current legislation have already reached out to Gov. Gavin Newsom in case the bill lands on his desk.

ADAPT San Ramon Valley is one such organization. The group of community members in Contra Costa County is "dedicated to addressing the issues related to underage drinking, marijuana use and prescription drug abuse in the San Ramon Valley."

Patty Hoyt is the prevention coordinator for ADAPT and has worked to defeat Wiener's "open late" bills. "I have been out in the community discussing the possibility of extending alcohol service ... in selected cities in California," Hoyt said. "I have yet to speak with anyone who thinks it's a good idea. Even though there is no city in Contra Costa County included in SB 58, residents realize that the late night drinking won't be confined to Oakland, San Francisco or Sacramento — the cities closest to the San Ramon Valley. People will leave those cities and return to their homes . "Alcohol-related problems such as DUI, emergency room visits and increased demands on law enforcement will fall on our communities," she continued.

**Like Hoyt, Assemblyman Tom Lackey (R-Palmdale) is against SB 58. A former law enforcement officer, he's had to deliver news to families after loved ones have been killed in DUI crashes. Lackey praised Wiener's intention, but said, "This is bad policy."**