

## Nightlife could last longer under bill from Scott Wiener

By **Trisha Thadani**, San Francisco Chronicle Published 12:05 am, Wednesday, February 15, 2017



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Bartender Lisa Hyde at the DNA Lounge. The nightclub is one of many in California that could benefit under a new state law that allows extended serving hours for alcohol.

San Francisco's state senator is taking another run at extending last call in California by two hours.

The bill, which Democrat Scott Wiener plans to introduce Wednesday, would allow bars and restaurants to serve alcohol between 2 a.m. and 4 a.m., pending appropriate permits and approval from the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control. Wiener's bill is similar to one proposed in 2013 by his predecessor, Mark Leno, D-San Francisco, which failed to get enough votes.

Based on the current law, some establishments can stay open until the wee hours of the morning — but, no matter what, they must stop serving alcohol at 2 a.m. Wiener's bill would give local jurisdictions control over whether their bars and restaurants can extend their last call.

"This bill is long overdue," Wiener said. "Right now in California, we have a one-size-fits-all statewide mandate, regardless if you are a small-town suburb of San Francisco or in downtown L.A."

Although Leno's bill did not conjure up enough support a few years ago, Wiener said there has been an increased demand from bars and restaurants looking to rake in a little extra revenue and from younger patrons who want to stay out a little later.

Several U.S. cities, including Chicago, New York City and Miami Beach, allow late-night service. But, in California, all bars have had to stop serving alcohol by 2 a.m. since 1935, according to John Carr, public information officer for the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control.

Those who support Wiener's bill say it will stimulate the state's economy and make cities like San Francisco more attractive tourist destinations. It will also help communities decide what is best for them, because what works in the Mission or Union Square — areas with a high concentration of bars and restaurants — may not work for more residential areas like the Sunset or Richmond districts, said Juliana Bunim, spokeswoman for the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce.

“At the end of the day, it is about neighborhoods deciding what is best for them,” Bunim said. “It is not a blanket approach — it's about bringing back local control.”

Jamie Zawinski, owner of DNA Lounge, a club that has [experienced major financial hardship](#) over the past few months, said being able to extend its hours would significantly help the business.

“We make almost all of our money selling alcohol, and we sell almost all alcohol between 11:30 and 1:30 on Fridays and Saturdays,” he said in an email. “That's only four hours a week!” DNA Lounge normally closes by 5 a.m.

Based on how a similar proposal was received in the past, Zawinski said he is not optimistic Wiener's bill will pass.

And those who opposed Leno's bill in 2013 are still not convinced.

Michael Scippa, director of public affairs for Alcohol Justice, a San Rafael nonprofit advocacy, research and policy organization, said it is a “foolish plan” that prioritizes alcohol revenue over public safety.

Scippa said that Alcohol Justice takes a lot of credit for killing Leno's bill in 2013 and that the organization will come out with “guns blazing” for Wiener's bill.

“We just don't need additional hours of business for this substance,” he said. “It's not like selling coffee and doughnuts. This is a substance which is a class one carcinogenic — it takes thousands in California every year — and is responsible for horrendous costs in various areas.”

The San Francisco Police Officers Association, which could not be reached for comment Tuesday afternoon, registered strong opposition to Leno's proposal in 2013: “It would just be more drunks at 4 than there were at 2,” Gary Delagnes, president of the association, told The Chronicle in 2013.

But Tom Temprano, co-owner of Virgil's Sea Room, a Mission District bar, said the legislation would be a boon for the city: “We are a world-class city here in S.F., but we really are behind the ball with New York City and Chicago when it comes to really fostering that full nightlife experience.”