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California bill would extend late-night drinking hours to 4 a.m.



Senate Bill 384, introduced last week by state Sen. Scott Wiener, D-San Francisco, would allow bars and restaurants to serve alcohol during the extended hours between 2 and 4 a.m. FILE (AP Photo/Brennan Linsley)

By [Kevin Smith](#), San Gabriel Valley Tribune

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California lawmakers see a lot of bills come across their desks each year.

Some are good, some are bad and others ... well, the jury is still out. One such bill is Senate Bill 384, introduced last week by state Sen. Scott Wiener, D-San Francisco. Otherwise known as the LOCAL Act (Let Our Communities Adjust Late Night), the measure would allow bars and restaurants to serve alcohol during the extended hours between 2 and 4 a.m.

The legislation, according to Wiener, was fueled by economics.

“California is a diverse state, with cities and neighborhoods that have different needs when it comes to nightlife,” he said in a release on his office’s website. “By granting local control to our cities to extend their late night hours, we can support areas that benefit economically and culturally from a strong nightlife presence while ensuring that other cities and neighborhoods retain their current rules.”

Wiener notes that the bill is supported by a broad coalition that includes the California Restaurant Association, Golden Gate Restaurant Association, California Music & Culture Association, California Hotel and Lodging Association and the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, among others.

California’s nighttime industry — which includes food service, bars/clubs, restaurants and live music — generates billions of dollars in consumer spending, he said, and it employs well over a million of Californians.

That’s all well and good, but some are not exactly thrilled with this idea.

The California Alcohol Policy Alliance (CAPA), an organization that seeks to enact, support and advocate for alcohol policies that keep youths and communities safe, figures this would be bad news all around.

According to CAPA, California already suffers more annual alcohol-related harm than any other state. That includes 10,572 deaths per year as well as 17,700 hospitalizations, a \$32 billion cost to the public and a \$13.7 billion cost to the government.

“This is really ludicrous,” CAPA Chairman Richard Zaldivar said. “It goes against all of the health and safety issues that we in the community have fought against for so many years. It would take a heavy toll on public safety.”

Zaldivar said the legislation is essentially a one-sided money grab by late-night establishments.

“The bars just want to make a quick buck,” he said. “And the extended hours are significant. I think 2 o’clock in the morning should give people plenty of time to indulge and get home safely.”

Jim Lazarus, senior vice president of public policy for the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, offered another take on the issue.

“We should determine at a city level how to best attract and support local nightlife businesses,” he said. “We can’t take a one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to nightlife in San Francisco neighborhoods. What’s best for one neighborhood might not be best for another, and this legislation allows us to capitalize on nightlife as an economic driver, increase jobs and local tax revenue, when deemed appropriate in a specific area of the city.”

When it’s put in those terms, this legislation seems to make sense.