

Battle Rages Over Bill Extending LA's Last Call To 4 A.M.

One Los Angeles City Councilman is leading the opposition to a bill that would allow the party to go on until 4 a.m. at LA bars and clubs.

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One Los Angeles City Councilman is leading the opposition to a bill that would allow the party to go on until 4 a.m. (Shutterstock)

LOS ANGELES, CA — Los Angeles City Councilman Paul Koretz and a group of activists spoke out Friday against a bill before the Legislature that would allow Los Angeles and nine other cities to extend alcohol sales to 4 a.m.

Koretz and the activists -- including members of Alcohol Justice and the California Alcohol Policy Alliance -- held a news conference outside Los Angeles City Hall to oppose SB 58, the latest of several attempts by Sen. Scott Wiener, D-San Francisco, to pass a law that would allow bars in some cities to stay open later than 2 a.m.

"Once again we're here fighting a bill that is so persistent that it has earned the name, the Zombie Bill, because we just can't kill it," Koretz said. "For the fourth time since 2014, Sen. Scott Wiener has reintroduced the bill that would extend alcohol sales from 2 a.m. to 4 a.m. No matter how many times the bill is beaten down by those of us who understand that defeating this bill is a life or death issue, Sen. Wiener and bar owners who seem willing to trade people's lives for liquor profits come back again and again."

Koretz introduced a resolution in March against the bill and held several news conferences in opposition to the idea of earlier bar times when Wiener was trying to pass the previous versions.

"This bill fails to address who will pay for the alcohol related harms that this bill will cost. This bill will endanger all the lives of the commuters that will be going to work in the early hours," said Veronica De Lara, co-chair of the California Alcohol Policy Alliance.

The reintroduced Let Our Communities Adjust Late Night Act (LOCAL) would grant Los Angeles, San Francisco, Oakland, Sacramento, Long Beach, West Hollywood, Coachella, Cathedral City, Fresno and Palm Springs the power to extend alcohol sales until as late as 4 a.m.

The bill's supporters argue that the law banning alcohol sales after 2 a.m. is an outdated requirement written in 1935 and is not in line with Los Angeles being one of the entertainment capitals of the world. They also say it would help businesses while giving the decision-making power to local jurisdictions.

The nonprofit group Alcohol Justice, which has opposed Weiner's bills, said findings from various domestic and international studies have found that extending bar hours increases alcohol-related harm, including motor vehicle collisions.

The Los Angeles Times Editorial Board endorsed an earlier version of Wiener's bill in 2017, saying "there's no firm science behind last-call laws, no data that prove that 2 a.m. is better than 4 a.m or 6 a.m. or any other time. The laws are more a reflection of a state's history, its cultural practices and its politics."

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