

# The Daily Independent

## My Thoughts: Pitfalls of a bill that extends the hours of alcohol sales

By John V. Ciani | Columnist

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I watched the Ridgecrest City Council meeting Wednesday, particularly the discussion of Senate Bill 384, introduced by state Sen. Scott Wiener (D-San Francisco), which would extend the hours for selling alcoholic beverages from 2 a.m. to 4 a.m.

I listened as acting Ridgecrest Police Chief Jed McLaughlin expressed his concerns about the bill.

I went to the California Alcohol Policy Alliance website which stated CAPA 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.

I then read the bill. The Legislative Digest stated in part, “The bill would provide that any person under 21 years of age who enters and remains in the permitted public premises during the additional serving hours without lawful business therein is guilty of a misdemeanor, as provided.

“This bill would impose a state-mandated local program by creating new crimes.

“The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

“This bill would provide that no reimbursement is required by this act for a specified reason.”

As I see it, bar owners, hotels, restaurants and other places that sell alcoholic beverages are the only ones who would benefit from this.

I listened to the council discussion and was impressed with Mayor Peggy Breeden's and Councilmember Wallace Martin's comments.

"This is one we can do without," said Breeden. She also pointed out that people commute to Trona to work at 4 a.m.

Martin said he is saddened and disgusted when bills like this come forward.

More Video:

One person airlifted Thursday afternoon after Hwy 14 collision that injured six people.

"This is a sick bill," he said. "I vote hell no."

Wallace, I could not have said it better myself.

I understand the council's and McLaughlin's concerns. During my newspaper career, I covered many alcohol-related accidents that resulted in serious injury and even death.

This sounds like a special-interest bill, and city of Ridgecrest officials need to let Assemblymember Vince Fong know they oppose SB 384.

I also listened to the discussion on the best voting policy for roll-call votes. I liked Martin's suggestion about using an electronic system, which would cost approximately \$10,000.

The St. Petersburg, FL City Council, where I live, uses such a system, and it works quite well.

An electronic system would be well-worth the city's consideration. Keep in mind that \$10,000 is a one-time expenditure.

— John V. Ciani is a retired Daily Independent education/water/public safety reporter. He currently resides in Florida.