

***Religious Leaders Urge Governor Brown to Sign AB 183:  
Raise Moral Concerns about Easy Access to Alcohol thru Self-Checkout Counters***

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (October 5, 2011) – Religious leaders from across the state are asking California Governor Jerry Brown to sign AB 183 to ban alcohol sales through self-serve checkout machines in California. The bill, authored by Assembly Member Fiona Ma (D-San Francisco), passed through the state legislature in early September and is awaiting the governor's action by October 9.

*“Our Catechism teaches that ‘grave guilt’ is brought upon anyone who ‘by drunkenness... endangers their own and others’ safety,’* stated Bishop Gabino Zavala, Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

*“We need laws that protect the souls of our people, young and old alike, who are tempted to abuse alcohol and those who are the victims of that abuse.”*

Research over the past few years from [UCLA](#) and [San Diego State University](#) shows that self-checkout machines failed to operate properly almost 10% of the time when alcohol was scanned, and that up to 32% of the time students were not asked to show ID. Moreover, Metro United Methodist Urban Ministry found that young people were able to "game" the self-checkout system almost 70% of the time, by scanning a 12-pack of soda and bagging a 12-pack of beer.

*“As a parent and religious leader I call upon the Governor to protect our children from easy access to alcohol by banning the sale of all alcohol through self-check-out registers,”* said Bishop Mark W. Holmerud, Sierra Pacific Synod, ELCA. *“It is our responsibility to ensure that children, families and our communities are protected through appropriate control of alcohol sales.”*

It has also been noted that self-serve checkout machines do not prevent already intoxicated adults from purchasing more alcohol. *“These machines fail 10% of the time to stop alcohol purchases,”* said Rev. Walter Contreras, National Coordinator Hispanic Ministries, Evangelical Covenant Church. *“One out of ten times youth try to purchase beer, wine or spirits they won’t even get carded. Our responsibility as a society is to help the least among us, and this is the least the Governor can do to control teen drinking.”*

A broad alliance of supporters for AB 183 includes not only top religious leaders throughout the state, but many organizations including MADD, Consumer Federation of California, California Council on Alcohol Problems (CalCap), Lutheran Office of Public Policy – California, California Police Chiefs, [Alcohol Justice](#), California Narcotic Officers Association, Metro United Methodist Urban Ministry, California's Police Officers (PORAC), and California Professional Firefighters.

*“If stores must sell alcohol, we ask adult clerks to be responsible for the sale process from beginning to end in making sure they are not selling it to those underage or inebriated,”* stated Shakeel Sayd, Islamic Shura Council of Southern California. *“I am proud to work with other faiths and community groups to see that alcohol sales are adequately controlled.”*

Many groups, organizations and individuals have campaigned for the passage of AB 183 through the legislature and are now asking the Governor to sign it to protect youth and help reduce alcohol-related harm in California – which according to a 2008 report by Alcohol Justice is a catastrophic annual [\\$38.4 billion dollar](#) drain on the state.

*“One thing every faith has in common is a concern for safe and healthy children,”* said Rev. Alan H. Jones, Chair, California-Nevada Annual Conference Board of Church and Society, UMC. *“We can’t trust an easily manipulated machine to be in charge of alcohol sales.”*

For more information on the dangers of self-serve alcohol sales, go to: <http://bit.ly/nC0jnU>

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