

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1232

*As Reported By House Committee on:
Commerce & Labor*

Title: An act relating to exempting microbreweries from any rule requiring the labeling of beer containers to reflect alcohol content.

Brief Description: Limiting requirements that beer labels reflect alcohol content.

Sponsor(s): Representatives Cole, Heavey, Nelson, Brekke and Anderson.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Commerce & Labor, February 5, 1991, DPA.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
COMMERCE & LABOR**

Majority Report: *Do pass as amended.* Signed by 8 members: Representatives Heavey, Chair; Fuhrman, Ranking Minority Member; Lisk, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Franklin; R. King; Prentice; Vance; and Wilson.

Staff: Jim Kelley (786-7166).

Background: In 1990, the Liquor Control Board adopted a rule, effective January 1, 1992, requiring that beer container labels list the quantity of alcohol contained in the beer. The liquor board has statutory authority to adopt rules regarding the labeling of all kinds of liquor.

Federal law prohibits a brewer from indicating alcohol content on its containers, unless required to do so by the state where the beer is sold. Therefore, for a brewer to comply with the new rule, it will have to develop a different set of labels for Washington than it uses for other states.

Summary of Amended Bill: The Liquor Control Board's authority to impose liquor labeling requirements does not include the authority to adopt rules that impede interstate commerce or require state specific labeling.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill: The amended bill completely removes the board's authority to require that beer be labeled for alcohol content rather than exempting only microbreweries from any labeling requirement.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: (Original Bill) The board's labeling rule will impose an unreasonable economic cost on microbreweries. This bill will insure that consumers of quality beverages have a significant range of options. In general, microbrews are very high quality beer containing few or no additives or preservatives. We should continue to encourage microbreweries in this state rather than placing financial burdens on them.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: (Original Bill) In favor: T.K. Bentler, Micro-Breweries; Jack Bryce, Hart Brewery Pyramid Beers; Pamela Hinckley, Redhook Brewery; Larry Bausch, Microbrew Appreciation Society; Charles Finkel, Microbrewer and Importer; Steve Wehrly, Miller Brewing Company; and Jan Gee, Washington Retail Association.