

RCW 19.126.040 Distributors' protections. Wholesale distributors are entitled to the following protections which are deemed to be incorporated into every agreement of distributorship:

(1) Agreements between wholesale distributors and suppliers must be in writing;

(2) A supplier must give the wholesale distributor at least sixty days prior written notice of the supplier's intent to cancel or otherwise terminate the agreement, unless such termination is based on a reason set forth in RCW 19.126.030(5) or results from a supplier acquiring the right to manufacture or distribute a particular brand and electing to have that brand handled by a different distributor. The notice must state all the reasons for the intended termination or cancellation. Upon receipt of notice, the wholesale distributor has sixty days in which to rectify any claimed deficiency. If the deficiency is rectified within this sixty-day period, the proposed termination or cancellation is null and void and without legal effect;

(3) The wholesale distributor may sell or transfer its business, or any portion thereof, including the agreement, to successors in interest upon prior approval of the transfer by the supplier. No supplier may unreasonably withhold or delay its approval of any transfer, including wholesaler's rights and obligations under the terms of the agreement, if the person or persons to be substituted meet reasonable standards imposed by the supplier;

(4) If an agreement of distributorship is terminated, canceled, or not renewed for any reason other than for cause, failure to live up to the terms and conditions of the agreement, or a reason set forth in RCW 19.126.030(5), the wholesale distributor is entitled to compensation from the successor distributor for the laid-in cost of inventory and for the fair market value of the terminated distribution rights. For purposes of this section, termination, cancellation, or nonrenewal of a distributor's right to distribute a particular brand constitutes termination, cancellation, or nonrenewal of an agreement of distributorship whether or not the distributor retains the right to continue distribution of other brands for the supplier. In the case of terminated distribution rights resulting from a supplier acquiring the right to manufacture or distribute a particular brand and electing to have that brand handled by a different distributor, the affected distribution rights will not transfer until such time as the compensation to be paid to the terminated distributor has been finally determined by agreement or arbitration;

(5) When a terminated distributor is entitled to compensation under subsection (4) of this section, a successor distributor must compensate the terminated distributor for the fair market value of the terminated distributor's rights to distribute the brand, less any amount paid to the terminated distributor by a supplier or other person with respect to the terminated distribution rights for the brand. If the terminated distributor's distribution rights to a brand of spirits or malt beverages are divided among two or more successor distributors, each successor distributor must compensate the terminated distributor for the fair market value of the distribution rights assumed by that successor distributor, less any amount paid to the terminated distributor by a supplier or other person with respect to the terminated distribution rights assumed by the successor distributor. A terminated distributor may not receive total compensation under this subsection that exceeds the fair market value of the terminated distributor's distribution rights with respect to the affected brand. Nothing in this section may be construed to

require any supplier or other third person to make any payment to a terminated distributor;

(6) For purposes of this section, the "fair market value" of distribution rights as to a particular brand means the amount that a willing buyer would pay and a willing seller would accept for such distribution rights when neither is acting under compulsion and both have knowledge of all facts material to the transaction. "Fair market value" is determined as of the date on which the distribution rights are to be transferred in accordance with subsection (4) of this section;

(7) In the event the terminated distributor and the successor distributor do not agree on the fair market value of the affected distribution rights within thirty days after the terminated distributor is given notice of termination, the matter must be submitted to binding arbitration. Unless the parties agree otherwise, such arbitration must be conducted in accordance with the American arbitration association commercial arbitration rules with each party to bear its own costs and attorneys' fees;

(8) Unless the parties otherwise agree, or the arbitrator for good cause shown orders otherwise, an arbitration conducted pursuant to subsection (7) of this section must proceed as follows: (a) The notice of intent to arbitrate must be served within forty days after the terminated distributor receives notice of terminated distribution rights; (b) the arbitration must be conducted within ninety days after service of the notice of intent to arbitrate; and (c) the arbitrator or arbitrators must issue an order within thirty days after completion of the arbitration;

(9) In the event of a material change in the terms of an agreement of distribution, the revised agreement must be considered a new agreement for purposes of determining the law applicable to the agreement after the date of the material change, whether or not the agreement of distribution is or purports to be a continuing agreement and without regard to the process by which the material change is effected. [2012 c 2 § 214 (Initiative Measure No. 1183, approved November 8, 2011); 2009 c 155 § 3; 1984 c 169 § 4.]

~~Finding—Application—Rules—Effective date—Contingent effective date—2012 c 2 (Initiative Measure No. 1183):~~ See notes following RCW 66.24.620.