

California: Bill to Ban Self-Serve Alcohol Sales in California Lands on Governor's Desk

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Alcohol Justice (formerly Marin Institute) is calling on California Governor Jerry Brown to quickly 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 Senate last week on a vote of 21 to 16 with 3 abstentions.

"We thank the Senators who voted yes on AB 183 and now ask the Governor to take quick action and sign it into law," stated Michael Scippa, Public Affairs Director at Alcohol Justice. "The rise in self-serve checkout lanes in California stores that sell alcoholic beverages is creating a recipe for disaster. Easy access to alcohol is a key driver of underage drinking, which in turn causes violent crime, car crashes, and high-risk sex."

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. Also, self-serve checkout machines do not prevent already intoxicated adults from purchasing more alcohol.

"Unfortunately the main opponents of this bill, the California Chamber of Commerce and state grocer associations, chose to ignore the evidence-based data," stated Jorge Castillo, Alcohol Justice Advocacy & Outreach Manager. They attempted to characterize the measure as a self-serving 'union-sponsored bill,' but really only succeeded in showing their true colors - protecting profits instead of public health and safety."

A broad alliance of supporters for AB 183 includes 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), California Professional Firefighters, and other organizations throughout the state. They campaigned for passage through the legislature and are now asking

the Governor to sign AB 183 to protect youth and help reduce alcohol-related harm in California - a catastrophic annual \$38.4 billion dollar drain on the state.

"In California we don't allow 'vending machine' sales of dangerous products, like tobacco, spray paint, many drugs, guns and ammo," added Scippa. "We should not allow the sale of alcohol, the most dangerous and abused drug of all, in any manner other than a face to face encounter with a trained clerk. AB 183 will accomplish that as soon as the Governor signs it into law. We ask him to do it soon."