

Wash. Liquor Sales Still Rising After Privatization

VANCOUVER, Wash. (AP) — Sales of hard liquor increased in the four months after the state privatized liquor sales on June 1, compared with sales during the same four-month period a year ago, the Washington state Department of Revenue said Tuesday.

The agency reported that spirit sales by volume were 2.9 percent higher for the period from June 1 through Sept. 30. Nearly 13.6 million liters were sold in that four-month period, compared with 13.2 million liters during the same four months in 2011.

Voters approved Initiative 1183 last fall, allowing retail stores to sell liquor and kicking the state out of a business it had tightly controlled since the end of Prohibition. Consumers began buying directly from retailers on June 1.

However, the initiative imposed additional fees on spirits to reimburse the state for millions of dollars in lost revenue, resulting in higher prices for consumers at many outlets. In June, liquor sales declined slightly compared with the same month in 2011, but many attributed the decline to consumers and businesses — particularly restaurants — stocking up on inventory before retail prices increased.

The Columbia newspaper reported Tuesday (<http://bit.ly/TMrnb6> [1]) that individual consumers bought 7.9 percent more booze from June 1 to Sept. 30. The dollar value of those sales also increased to \$263 million, up 23 percent from \$214 million.

Meanwhile, sales to bars and restaurants fell 12.6 percent, though the Revenue Department said it expects those sales to increase as businesses use up the liquor they've stockpiled in their inventory.

The average retail price of a liter of spirits, including taxes, was \$24.09 in September, compared to \$21.58 at state liquor stores a year earlier. That's about \$2 more for a standard 750-milliliter bottle, or fifth, which is 22.5 ounces.

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<http://www.foodmanufacturing.com/news/2012/12/wash-liquor-sales-still-rising-after-privatization>

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[1] <http://bit.ly/TMrnb6>