

Tenn. Supermarket Wine Bill Advances

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — A measure that would let Tennessee voters decide whether their cities or counties allow wine to be sold in supermarkets and convenience stores is on a fast track to a full House vote after passing a budget panel on Wednesday.

The measure sponsored by Republican Rep. Jon Lundberg of Bristol sailed through the House Budget Subcommittee on a voice vote. Language in a similar House bill was consolidated into Lundberg's proposal.

"That was one of the quickest meetings we've had," said Lundberg. "Frankly, it's because ... we've spent a lot of time over the past few months talking with various parties and getting it to the point where I think we've got a lot of support from a lot of legislators and we've got a lot of support from a lot of people in the state."

The proposal would allow cities and counties to vote on grocery store wine sales as early as November, but wouldn't allow supermarkets to stock wine until at least July 2016.

The measure is similar to a version that passed the Senate 23-8 last week.

One of the few differences is that the Senate version would require convenience stores to have at least 1,200 square feet to qualify for a wine sales license, while the House version would set that limit at 2,000 square feet.

Under current law, supermarkets and convenience stores can sell beer containing up to 6.5 percent alcohol by volume. Anything stronger can only be sold in package stores, which can't sell anything beyond booze and lottery tickets.

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