

## **La. Lawmakers Give Wine Ice Cream Sales the Cold Shoulder**

MELINDA DESLATTE, Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — Efforts to add wine-infused ice cream to supermarket shelves got a frosty reception Thursday from Louisiana lawmakers who worried that minors could get drunk off the tasty treat.

The state's Office of Alcohol and Tobacco Control says lawmakers need to authorize the sale of alcohol-laced ice cream before it can hit grocers' freezers.

But just how to shelve and sell pints of Cherry Merlot and Red Raspberry Chardonnay — sold by Mercer's Dairy of New York — confounded members of the House Judiciary Committee. Some lawmakers questioned whether Louisiana is ready to stock items like Buzz Bars, ice cream bars that contain whiskey, cognac, rum or lemon vodka among other flavors.

"Is this ice cream going to be displayed in the Blue Bell ice cream box?" asked Rep. Rob Shadoin, R-Ruston. "Is this going to be ice cream that's available at the convenience store, at the grocery store? Is that what we're talking about?"

"That's correct," replied Rep. Marcus Hunter, D-Monroe, the bill's sponsor.

"So DWI can now mean 'Driving while ice-creamed?'" Shadoin asked.

Lawmakers on the committee worried that people under Louisiana's legal drinking age of 21 could buy the boozy treats.

"I think we need some safeguards so minors don't buy a product that can be harmful to them," said Rep. Ray Garofalo, R-Chalmette.

Amid the concerns, Hunter shelved his bill temporarily to try to work out language that would require ID verification to sell wine ice cream. The committee could take up the proposal again at its next meeting, April 10.

"I think we can work this out," Hunter said.

Chris Young, a lobbyist representing the Beer Industry League of Louisiana, said alcohol-infused ice creams are new products, and he said their alcohol content is high enough that it reaches the threshold triggering regulation in Louisiana.

But Young said he believes lawmakers could regulate it like they do other forms of alcohol that are restricted for sale to people 21 years old and older and that require identification to prove people are legally allowed to buy it.

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Committee members didn't just question the logistics of selling whiskey-laced chocolate ice cream bars. They also questioned the taste.

"Have you tried any of this ice cream?" asked Rep. Ledricka Thierry, D-Opelousas.

Hunter replied, "I'm currently dieting, Rep. Thierry, and this is not within the confines of my diet, so no, I have not."

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