



**Testimony in Support of SB 2220
March 22, 2021**

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Abigail Christiansen, with Americans for Prosperity North Dakota. Americans for Prosperity is a grassroots organization aimed at reducing barriers to opportunity. We support SB 2220 as it allows for freedom of choice for businesses to conduct commerce when it is best for them. This bill does not mandate that all businesses must be open or allow for sales of alcohol but instead lifts government regulation on an already heavy regulated sector.

Passage of SB 2220 means a fighting chance for border cities in a competitive restaurant and recreation business environment. We believe that government should enable, not hinder, room for innovation and competition in the private sector. By letting the customer base drive operation decisions instead of forced government regulations, small businesses are in a better position to survive and succeed. Please vote a DO PASS on SB 2220.

Thank you,

Abigail Christiansen
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The North Dakota Legislature is debating Senate Bill 2220, which if passed will allow businesses that sell alcoholic beverages to begin doing so at 8 a.m. Sunday – the same opening time allowed during the rest of the week.

Written By: Herald editorial board | 6:00 am, Feb. 10, 2021



As the pandemic continues, it's important that retailers of all types are given considerations to recoup some of the losses they have incurred during a year of financial pandemonium.

Herald editorial board

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Not too long ago, North Dakotans couldn't purchase furniture before noon on a Sunday. Same for garden supplies, general hardware or sporting goods. The list could go on. However, they could purchase groceries or various sundries at a convenience store on Sunday mornings.

It was a relic of the state's old blue laws, which restricted Sunday morning commerce on grounds that the hours before noon on that day should be reserved for church and family time. It also was terribly unfair, since some stores could be open but others could not. As we wrote in the past, North Dakotans could buy a gallon of milk or gas on Sunday morning, but not a gallon of paint.

Now, the North Dakota Legislature is debating Senate Bill 2220, which if passed will allow businesses that sell alcoholic beverages to begin doing so at 8 a.m. Sunday – the same opening time allowed during the rest of the week. The intent behind SB 2220 is to give at least a modicum of opportunity for businesses to recover from the financial instability wrought by the coronavirus pandemic. One of the bill's sponsors, Sen. Scott Meyer, R-Grand Forks, said it's about more than just bars and restaurants – retailers, golf courses and other seasonal businesses could use a boost, too.

SB 2220 initially failed in a 26-21 Senate vote Thursday. Its backers then rallied and brought it to another vote Friday; the second time, it passed 24-22. The bill now heads to the House of Representatives.

It took decades before North Dakotans could buy something as basic as lawn seed or an easy chair before noon on a Sunday. In 2019, the restrictions were loosened and, by anecdotal appearances, not much has changed with the way North Dakotans spend time with family or attend church. But this time, it's about alcohol – sure to stir at least some level of concern among the most conservative North Dakotans.

Remember the long path that led here: In the late 1800s, laws against "Sabbath breaking" were first enacted. It took until the 1980s and 1990s before those laws were loosened, allowing some retailers – grocery stores, for instance – to open. And it wasn't until almost two years ago that it was eased to the point where more stores could open on Sunday mornings. It was a process slowed by arguments that restrictions should remain for Sunday mornings.

But should the government really be limiting how we spend our free time, or whether we have time for church? No, it shouldn't.

And as the pandemic continues, it's important that retailers of all types are given considerations to recoup some of the losses they have incurred during a year of financial pandemonium.

Allowing alcohol sales on Sunday morning will not lead to statewide anarchy. In fact, some businesses may not decide to open earlier, even if SB 2220 is passed.

Will SB 2220 truly help businesses recover from the pandemic? For some, perhaps.

What's important is that the opportunity exists, that sellers of alcohol are finally given a chance equal to other businesses and that the government distances itself from restrictions that determine how we spend our Sunday mornings.

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