



**House
Legislative
Analysis
Section**

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FORT MACKINAC LIQUOR LICENSE

House Bill 4514 with committee amendment
First Analysis (4-12-89)

Sponsor: Rep. Richard A. Sofio
Committee: Liquor Control

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THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

The Mackinac Island State Park Commission is requesting that the Liquor Control Act be amended to allow the issuance of a license to its concessionaire at the restaurant in historic Fort Mackinac. The availability of alcohol in this restaurant would be a benefit to tourists and to the island economy, a park representative has said.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

The bill would amend the Liquor Control Act to authorize the Liquor Control Commission to issue a Class C license to a concessionaire of the Mackinac Island State Park Commission operating a restaurant located within Fort Mackinac. The license would require the approval of the Mackinac Island State Park Commission and would be outside the usual population quota restrictions that limit the number of on-premises licenses available in a community. The license would not be transferable as to ownership or location. (A Class C license allows the retail sale of beer, wine, and spirits for consumption on the premises.)

MCL 436.17g

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

Although no specific information is available, a park commission representative told the House Liquor Control Committee that the license would likely enhance tourist revenue. (4-11-89)

ARGUMENTS:

For:

Park officials believe that the restaurant at Fort Mackinac, and the island in general, would benefit from the ability to offer alcoholic beverages to the public. It would be a service to visitors who want a drink with their meal at the fort. Reportedly, licensees on the island do not object to a license for the restaurant at the fort. While commercial licensees generally oppose allowing the state to compete with private industry and would oppose granting licenses at other state parks, they consider Mackinac Island a special case. This bill will be of benefit to the state's rapidly growing tourist economy.

Against:

This is yet another expansion of the liquor law's restrictions on the issuance of liquor licenses on state property. What will the response be when concessionaires at other state parks request the ability to obtain liquor licenses? Is this an example of "the camel's nose inside the tent?" There is no need for a license of this kind. There is no alcohol availability problem on Mackinac Island. Some people are convinced that increasing the availability of alcohol simply increases the number of alcohol-related problems in society. To say that the sale of alcohol will boost revenues is to ignore the costs alcohol abuse inflicts.

Against:

Some people who do not oppose this bill nevertheless complain about the inequitable treatment in allowing liquor licenses. In the recent past, proposals to expand the availability of alcohol at the state fairgrounds, for example, both for the state fair and for Softball City within the fairgrounds, have been rejected, either by the governor or legislature. There is a need for consistent treatment of this issue.

POSITIONS:

The Mackinac Island State Park Commission supports the bill. (4-11-89)

The Liquor Control Commission is not opposed to the bill. (4-11-89)

The Michigan Licensed Beverage Association supports the bill. (4-11-89)

The Michigan Interfaith Council on Alcohol Problems opposes the bill. (4-11-89)

H.B. 4514 (4-12-89)