

## Omaha lawmakers look to regulate party buses by adding liquor licenses

Written by Brian Mastre

**OMAHA, Neb. (WOWT)--** State lawmakers are tackling underage drinking and looking to regulate party buses in Omaha.

Project Extra Mile believes that if you make the party buses abide by state liquor laws, future tragedies will be prevented due to law enforcement having easier access.

The party bus owners believe it's just another regulation since they're already registered with the public service commission and Department of Transportation.

Joe Bisgard and his Party Express bus average 150 customers a weekend. It's billed a safer way to get around especially when alcohol is involved.

"When we book them, we try to get them to be picked up at a hotel or house or someplace where they can sober up at the end," said Bisgard.

The buses are used for wedding parties, birthday bar hopping, and Christmas light viewing.

Party buses cannot provide alcohol, but as long as you're 21 or older, you can bring on and drink alcohol.

Bisgard is worried the state may go too far in forcing party buses to have liquor licenses.

"They're going after the ones who are paying the insurance, that is registered legally, that are doing everything they're supposed to do. We'll work with anybody," said Bisgard.

State Senator Megan Hunt says the idea for the extra layer of regulation for party buses is to have an avenue where the state could now go after unscrupulous operators, targeting minors and alcohol.

For Hunt, it's a public safety issue.

Bisgard is worried about what this will do to his already high insurance rates.

"The insurance company will probably double our rates because now we're responsible for everything, even what we have no control over. We don't control alcohol. We don't control what they drink in a bar, yet they're putting it all on our lap," said Bisgard.

Hunt says the \$75 annual liquor license would still allow minors on a party bus as long as they aren't drinking, and that it would not force party bus owners to have security.

Bisgard argues that they're not like a bar, they are in the transportation business.

The bill is expected to come up on the floor of the legislature next session.