



The Extra Mile

Advocating for evidence-based policies and practices to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harms

Legislative Resolutions Introduced to Study State Liquor Laws *Alcohol policy environment impacts health and safety of Nebraskans*

State senators will have a key opportunity to gather more comprehensive information to determine the public health and safety impacts of alcohol policies in Nebraska. A number of legislative resolutions (LRs) have been introduced related to alcohol issues in Nebraska, including:



- [LR 115](#) (Sen. John Lowe) will examine the manufacture, sale and distribution of alcohol, the types of liquor licenses, and the taxes and fees collected by the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission.
- [LR 187](#) (Sen. John Cavanaugh) will review laws pertaining to retail liquor license applications and requirements, the expansion of licensed premises, and the transfer of alcohol between retail locations.
- [LR 174](#) (Sen. Tom Briese) will study issues within the jurisdiction of the General Affairs Committee.

Alcohol-related policy proposals are often referred to General Affairs, and all three LRs will be scheduled for a hearing before this committee.

[Read more](#)

Miles to Go: Kearney City Council Expands Sunday Sales *Experts warn increasing alcohol sales is linked to more problems in communities*

In June, the Kearney City Council voted to expand the city's hours of



alcohol sales on Sundays. Before the change, sales occurred from 7 a.m. to 1 a.m. Monday through Saturday. Sunday sales had begun at 11 a.m. but will now be allowed four hours earlier after the council voted unanimously to adopt the policy change.

“It’s a significant inconvenience for individuals who want to purchase the alcohol,” said Councilmember Jonathan Nikkila, according to [Local4 News](#).

Unfortunately, added convenience has played a role in driving up alcohol sales and increasing alcohol-related harms to alarming levels during the pandemic. The Community Preventive Services Task Force (CPSTF) recommends [maintaining existing limits on the days and hours during which alcoholic beverages are sold](#). Studies have found that limiting the times of sale can impact alcohol consumption and related harms, and increasing hours of purchase by two or more hours in on-premise settings has been associated with these types of problems for communities.

Further, researchers have found allowing previously banned alcohol sales on either Saturdays or Sundays increased excessive alcohol consumption and related harms, including motor vehicle crashes, DUIs, police encounters with intoxicated people, assaults, and domestic disturbances. A 1995 repeal of a ban on Sunday sales was associated with a 30% increase in motor vehicle fatalities on Sundays in New Mexico.

Alcohol Sales Spike During Pandemic

US alcohol consumption saw the largest volume gain in nearly two decades

In line with states across the country, alcohol sales hit a record in Nebraska in 2020. The Nebraska Liquor Control Commission's statistics indicate that [liquor and wine sales rose by 11.5% during 2020, while beer sales were up 4%](#).



Total beverage alcohol volume in the US in 2020 also [increased by 2%](#), marking the most significant gain for alcohol consumption in the country since 2002, according to IWSR. The report noted that the largest gains were seen across the ready-to-drink (RTD) category, including the hard seltzer sub-category.

“The overall RTD category shows no signs of slowing down – IWSR expects RTDs to grow to be 22% volume share of total beverage alcohol by 2025 in the US.”

RTDs grew +62.3% by volume, led by hard seltzers which grew +130%. In Nebraska, LB 274 *significantly* reduced the alcohol excise tax on RTD cocktails made with distilled spirits. The governor signed the liquor omnibus bill on May 26, 2021, which contains several provisions that will negatively impact communities.

In addition to lowering the excise tax rate by 75% per gallon for RTD cocktails made from distilled spirits - a move that will lead to millions of dollars in lost revenue and an increase in excessive drinking - LB 274 includes permanent allowances for liquor licenses to sell cocktails-to-go and sales of alcohol to a person in a motor vehicle. The bill was a knee-jerk reaction to the pandemic while alcohol sales soared in the state.

A 2017 study by Xuan et al. published in the *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs* concluded that the average inflation-adjusted [state alcohol excise tax rate declined 30% for beer, 32% for distilled spirits, and 27% for wine](#) from 1991 to 2015. Meanwhile, the economic and social costs of drinking far exceed alcohol tax revenues. A study by researchers at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that, in 2010, Nebraska's costs due to excessive alcohol consumption were \$1.16 billion, \$491 million of which was paid for by the government. In contrast, the state only took in \$27.6 million in taxes that year, or a mere 5.6% of its cost.

Alcohol taxation and pricing policies are among the most effective and cost-effective measures to prevent alcohol-related harms. The Community Preventive Services Task Force recommends addressing alcohol excise taxes to promote public health and safety. Studies have shown that increases in alcohol prices and taxes are associated with reductions in alcohol consumption and related problems.

Did You Know?

Alcohol-related harms worsen during public health crisis

Several studies conducted throughout the US have uncovered increases in alcohol-related harms during the pandemic.

- More than a dozen studies have found that 20% to 40% of individuals surveyed reported [consuming more alcohol](#) than usual during the pandemic.
- The number of patients presenting with [alcoholic hepatitis](#) more than doubled (127.2%) compared to 2019.
- Compared with the same period in 2019, the proportion of [emergency department \(ED\) visits](#) for alcohol withdrawal increased between March 1 and May 31, 2020.
- Estimates released in February by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) indicate that in the first six months of 2020, [life expectancy](#) at birth for the total US population declined by one year from 78.8 in 2019.
- The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recently reported on the disturbing trend of [traffic fatalities](#) in 2020. A total of 38,680 people lost their lives last year, the largest number of deaths since 2007. This increase occurred as [individuals were traveling less due to COVID-19](#).
- Preliminary data reported by Governors Highway Safety Association in



March projects the US [pedestrian fatality rate](#) per billion VMT jumped to 2.2 deaths for the first six months of 2020 compared to 1.8 during the same period in 2019 – a 20% increase. For the driver and/or pedestrian, alcohol impairment was reported in about half of traffic crashes that resulted in pedestrian fatalities in 2019.

- People with alcohol use disorder (AUD) may have an [increased risk](#) of developing severe COVID-19 because alcohol impairs lung immune responses.

Save the Date to Celebrate 25 Years

Anniversary event planned for October 21



On **Thursday, October 21, 2021, at 6:00 p.m.**, Project Extra Mile will celebrate the organization's 25th Anniversary at Champions Run with dinner, an awards ceremony, and a presentation by advocates on past, present, and future efforts to prevent excessive alcohol use in Nebraska. All three of Project Extra Mile's executive directors will participate in the evening's events.

As we prepare to celebrate two and a half decades of community partnerships, we will pay tribute to those individuals and organizations that have helped us to fulfill our vital mission of *advocating for evidence-based policies and practices to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harms.*

We would be honored if you would join us for this event. Twenty-five years is no small feat, and we know that it would not be possible without your involvement over the years. We hope you can commemorate this important milestone with us.

