

SB338/Senate Finance Committee
Oral/Written Testimony 23 Feb 24
American Legion Stanley Cochrane Post 16 Crisfield, Md.
Terry S. Pehan, Adjutant

The Honorable Pamela Beidle and Committee Members:

Chairman Beidle and Committee members, good afternoon. I am Terry Pehan. I'm a volunteer, and serve as Adjutant of our American Legion Post in Crisfield, Maryland. I am also a retired Air Force officer having served for over 26 years. Thank you for this opportunity to appear before the Senate Finance Committee in support of SB338.

When Somerset County divested itself from operating the county alcohol dispensary, the accepted understanding was that local establishments, like the Legion and the Elks, holders of "Class C: Beer, Wine and Liquor licenses" would be able to purchase their alcohol requirements from any licensed county retailer.

The current system of requiring **ALL** alcohol beverages to be purchased **ONLY** from state authorized wholesale distributors was, we believe, an unintentional result. After all, why would small, non-profit organizations like our local Legion Post and Elks Lodges be forced to buy ALL their alcohol from a mini-monopoly of only three alcohol distributors???

I would like to strongly emphasize that these same restrictive alcohol purchasing requirements DO NOT EXIST for any other products needed to operate our small Post. For example, food and operational supplies.

We can buy our food from large wholesale distributors like Holt and Sysco...or, we can buy whatever we need from our local Food Lion, Dollar General, small seafood businesses or farmers' markets. There are NO restrictions on our purchasing from any of these suppliers, only on alcohol!

It is important to emphasize that the mini-monopolies of the three alcohol distributors are not being eliminated from selling to the Legion. SB338 provides us choice! The same choice that you and I enjoy every day so that competitive, "best price" purchasing is provided to small, non-profit organizations like the Legion and the Elks.

We all competitively purchase every day for essential commodities like gasoline, food, clothes; and.... we "shop around" so to speak. Well, for the Legion and Elks, an essential commodity is alcohol. We need to be provided that same opportunity to purchase competitively to "shop around"from county retail businesses as well as our current wholesalers.

Your support of SB338 will allow veteran and fraternal organizations like the Legion and the Elks to purchase in smaller quantities, purchase last minute requirements and most importantly, to purchase competitively in this challenging economic environment.

We need your help to survive!! We strongly ask for your favorable report on SB338 as amended.

Thank You.