

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2003 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

House Bill 708

(Delegate Arnick)

Economic Matters

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Alcoholic Beverages - Light Wine

This bill increases from 14% to 15.5% the amount of alcohol by volume that defines a light wine. The bill also increases from 14% to 22% the amount of alcohol by volume that defines a light wine in Baltimore, Carroll, Frederick, Garrett, and Talbot counties.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: State finances would not be directly affected.

Local Effect: Local government finances would not be directly affected.

Small Business Effect: Potential meaningful. Small businesses in Maryland that are retail alcoholic beverages licensees could sell a greater variety of wine products.

Analysis

Current Law: In Maryland, light wine is defined as any naturally fermented wine containing not more than 14% alcohol by volume. State law also provides that in Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, St. Mary's, Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester counties, light wine is defined as any naturally fermented wine containing not more than 22% alcohol by volume. In Montgomery County, light wine is defined as any naturally fermented or fortified wine containing not more than 22% alcohol by volume. In Harford County, light wine is defined as any naturally fermented wine containing not more than 23% alcohol by volume.

Background: Wine making technology has evolved over the last 20 years and many wines now have alcohol by volume percentages of 14% or higher. Additionally, new products such as “ice” wines and certain types of brandy have alcohol content by volume greater than 14%. Under current law these products are not legally available for sale.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Dorchester County, Kent County, Montgomery County, Prince George’s County, Washington County, Worcester County, Comptroller’s Office, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 27, 2003
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