

SUBJECT: Seven-day yearly wine sale permit in Dawson County

COMMITTEE: Licensing and Administrative Procedures — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 9 ayes — Wilson, Kubiak, Brimer, Dear, Goolsby, D. Jones, Pickett, Torres, Yarbrough
0 nays

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, February 15 — 30-0

WITNESSES: For — Donald Bethel
Against — None

DIGEST: CSSB 414 would permit a winery in a predominately dry county of 15,000 or less population that has one wet city (Dawson County) to sell wine for off-premises consumption for seven consecutive days a year. The wine sold would have to be manufactured, bottled and sold on the winery premises and be made from grapes grown in the dry area. The holder of the winery permit would have to notify the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission 14 days before selling wine. CSSB 414 would take effect immediately if approved by two-thirds of the membership of each house.

SUPPORTERS SAY: CSSB 414 would help Dawson County promote tourism, economic development and agricultural diversity by amending the Alcoholic Beverage Code to allow limited wine sales to consumers, for off-premises consumption, for one week a year in the county. The code currently allows wineries in dry areas to sell only to wholesalers and retailers.

Although cotton is the predominate crop of Dawson County, a multimillion-dollar vineyard and winery has been established and offers the perfect place for a yearly celebration promoting tourism and showcasing the area's agricultural diversity. This July the city of Lamesa in Dawson County will host the "Golden Tornado Jubilee," a week-long combined high school reunion held every five years. In addition the community would like to sponsor an annual "Harvest Festival" to celebrate the grape harvest and demonstrate winemaking.

Organizers would like to hold certain events at the winery, including organized tours and demonstrations, and the best way to showcase the unique assets of a winery would be to allow attendees to take home a bottle of wine made from grapes grown in the area. The bill would foster pride and economic growth for the winery and the community of Dawson.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

CSSB 414 would give a benefit to the Dawson County winery that other wineries under the same restrictions would not have. Other wineries in dry areas, and their respective communities, would also benefit through tourism and economic development if they could sell wine to consumers for off-premises consumption. If allowing limited sale for off-premises consumption is a worthy idea, then it should apply to other wineries as well.

NOTES:

The committee substitute clarifies that a winery may not sell wine in a dry area except as provided by the bill.

SB 539 by Montford, which would allow dry areas to vote on allowing or prohibiting the sale of wine for off-premise consumption by wineries in the area, was referred to the Senate State Affairs Committee on February 14.