

# New Signage Proposed (Again!) For Businesses Selling Alcohol

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**H**ave you ever walked into a restaurant in Washington State and seen a sign warning that women should not drink during pregnancy? Don't be surprised if your answer is "No, but I know I have seen signs in other states." Believe it or not. Washington State has no state law requiring point of purchase signs warning about the dangers of drinking during pregnancy. The Legislature did pass a law last year requiring signs in state liquor stores, but that law does not cover grocery stores, restaurants, bars, convenience stores, wine tasting rooms, and all of the other locations where alcohol is sold.

## Bill Dies

So, during the 1994 legislative session State Senator Lorraine Wojohn and State Representative Sue Karahalios each introduced a bill requiring signs at all points of purchase. These two bills were allowed to die in committee because the state Liquor Control Board (LCB) testified that they could make a rule which would accomplish the same thing that a law would.

A sign was designed after a lot of input from these two legislators, Mary Lowry, the First Lady of Washington State, the state attorney general, prominent FAS researchers, the FAS Adolescent Task Force, the FAS Interagency Coordinating Committee, the Washington Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Washington Medical Association, and many others interested in taking a step to stop more babies from being born with FAS or FAE. The sign read: "Warning. Women should avoid alcohol during pregnancy. Alcohol during pregnancy may cause birth defects. For more information about Fetal Alcohol Syndrome call 1 800-662-9111."

## Opposition Revealed

At a public hearing June 8th, the LCB heard testimony from various representatives of the liquor industry and some retail associations against the proposed language in the sign. Some of the objections were:



**ZERO Alcohol = ZERO Risk**

**Alcohol use during pregnancy  
may cause birth defects  
like Fetal Alcohol Syndrome.**

For more information call 1-800-662-9111.

This is the warning sign proposed by the Liquor Control Board. The public hearing is on August 24 at 9:30 am. You can call or fax in your comments regarding this sign.

the LCB shouldn't be giving medical advice; that telling women not to drink any alcohol in pregnancy wasn't accurate; that only excessive drinking was the problem; that the LCB didn't have the authority to require any sign, etc. After all of the testimony, Mike Murphy, one of the LCB members, made a motion that the proposed sign be adopted. Neither of the other two members, Chairman Joe McGavick and Jack Rabourn, seconded the motion. As a result, the motion died and it was back to square one. Now the earliest that the signs can be up is October, a full two months later than expected.

## New Language

New language has now been proposed and another public hearing is scheduled for August 24th at 9:30 a.m. at the Liquor Control Board in Olympia. Let your voice

be heard! Come to the hearing if you can. If you can't make the hearing, mail or fax your comments to the LCB prior to the hearing. Let's let the LCB and the liquor industry hear loud and clear that we believe signs are an important part of how we stop FAS and FAE and that we do care what they say. We want a good public health message that is clear and to the point like the original proposed language.

The very best recommendation is no alcohol at all during pregnancy. ■

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