

## Oregon Liquor Control adds 50-cent surcharge to liquor

by Bend\_Weekly\_News\_Sources

### Special Meeting Held to Offset Compensation Cuts To Liquor Agents by Bill Passed by Oregon Senate and House to Re-balance Budget

PORTLAND, Ore. – At a special meeting held today, the commissioners of the Oregon Liquor Control Commission adopted a temporary price increase on distilled spirits from April 1 through June 30, 2009. The increase is a 50-cent surcharge per bottle on all distilled spirits products.

The Senate and the House passed a bill to re-balance the current biennium's budget. Part of that impact would reduce agents' compensation by \$3.8 million.

Initially, the OLCC negotiated a \$1.5 million inventory reduction as well as providing additional agency funds to offset the impact to agents. With the negotiations, the impact on liquor agents was reduced to between \$500,000 to \$1.9 million

Depending on sales, the surcharge adopted today is expected to generate at least \$1.5 million to further reduce the impact on liquor agents.

The agency hopes that this additional revenue will have the minimum impact possible under legislative guidelines of \$500,000 on the liquor agents.

– The commission is looking at this temporary increase as a means to assist in filling the state's budget hole for the 2007-2009 biennium, said Steve Pharo, OLCC Executive Director. – Through additional funds from the agency, proposed inventory reduction and the proposed price increase, we've successfully reduced the impact to liquor agents from the original proposal of \$3.8 million. We look to work closely with agents as we resolve this issue.

The OLCC provided additional funds from the agency's operating budget, in addition to the cuts required by legislature. Also, the agency and the liquor agents will work together to accomplish a \$1.5 million reduction in inventory.

Liquor agents are independent contractors who manage and operate the liquor stores. The stores are required to be open a minimum of eight hours a day Monday through Saturday with six of those hours between noon and 6 p.m. Liquor agents have the discretion to be open Sundays and legal holidays. Hours of operation, vary from store to store.

The five citizen commissioners are the policy-making body of the OLCC. They meet monthly for one or two days to make decisions on liquor licenses, rules, contested case hearings and appointments of liquor store agents. Commission meetings are held every other month at OLCC's main office, 9079 SE McLoughlin Blvd., Room 103A in Portland.

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