

Lawsuit challenging 24-hour sale of alcohol on Maui filed against liquor commission

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The fight against recent changes to Maui's liquor laws is heating up.

A lawsuit challenging the 24-hour sale of alcohol was filed against the liquor commission on Friday and in just a couple of days, the commission is holding a special meeting to hear testimony from the public.

Several groups from the community are expected to speak to commissioners at the meeting on Tuesday and commissioners could take action on the matter by Wednesday.

- **Special meeting:** Tuesday, May 9, at 9 a.m.
- **General meeting and possible decision:** Wednesday, May 10, at 9 a.m.
- **Location:** Department of Liquor Control conference room, David K. Trask Jr. Office Building, 2145 Kaohu Street, Room 108 in Wailuku
- **Submit Testimony:** Persons interested in presenting written testimony of any agenda item shall submit the signed written testimony to the Director, Department of Liquor Control, 2145 Kaohu Street, Room 105, Wailuku, Maui, Hawaii 96793 at or prior to the time of the hearing.

Madge Schaefer, the plaintiff in the lawsuit, told KHON2 the community was left with no other option than to take legal action.

"The Sunshine Law provides 90 days to challenge notice and we filed this because we were running out of time," Schaefer said.

The liquor commission made the changes back in February which now allow the 24-hour sale of alcohol, home deliveries, and it also lifted the cap on the number of hostess bars in the county.

"The changes that were made were shocking," Schaefer said. "Hotel bars are now open until 4:00 in the morning. I mean, we're Las Vegas."

The hostess bar cap was previously set at 12 and had been that way for years.

"With all the things that we as a community have to deal with, why that would be so important?" Mahina Martin, a petitioner against the new liquor laws, said. "We've not yet met the 12 maximum for well over a decade, there's no waiting list for licensees."

According to minutes from that February meeting, a committee of various liquor license holders proposed the 24-hour sales because the group wanted the ability to serve around the clock in an effort to be more business-friendly.

Commission members characterized the rule amendments as "mostly housekeeping," but opponents disagree and claim the commission didn't provide adequate public notice about the intended changes.

"When you're doing the bare minimum of a classified ad in the newspaper, it's not something that the ordinary citizen is aware of," Martin said.

A county spokesman told KHON2 it can't comment on pending litigation. However, the county did comply with the 30-day notice that's required.

Mothers Against Drunk Driving was not available for an on-air comment today, but the group's position remains the same – MADD is against the changes saying drunk driving could increase and it puts Maui citizens at risk.

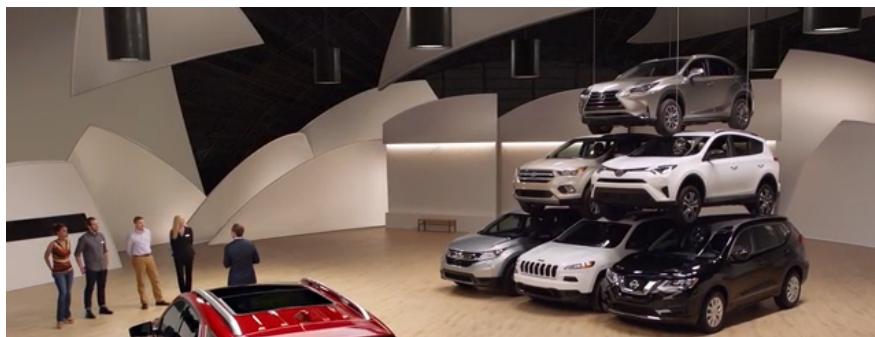
Once the testimony is heard, the liquor commission could decide to repeal the changes or keep them in place at their regular meeting on Wednesday.

Stay with KHON2 for updates on the rule changes.



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