

Lemmond sees compromise in liquor system proposal

By JOHN HOINSKI
Staff Writer

State Sen. Charles D. Lemmond, Jr., R-Dallas, says he believes outgoing governor Dick Thornburgh's proposal to turn the liquor system over to private enterprise will end up with some sort of compromise.

"It's such a complicated legal issue that I think it will have great difficulty getting through the way the order is now," Lemmond said. "I would have to believe that there will be some sort of workable compromise made."

Last week Thornburgh, in what he termed as "my going away present to Pennsylvania," signed an executive order he hopes will end the state's 53-year-old liquor monopoly. Under the order, the operation would be phased out and would also transfer other duties of the Liquor Control Board to other state departments by June 30.

Thornburgh signed the order last week after the state Legislature's session ended without any compromise agreement on extending the operation of the LCB under the state's Sunset Act.

That order may apparently be overruled by incoming governor Robert P. Casey, however, when he takes office after Thornburgh's term expires on January 20.

"I did vote for a two-year extension of the LCB bill," Lemmond stated. "That would keep it under state control for two more years and give the new governor a chance to outline his plans for reform of the system."

In the fiscal year ending June, 1985, the LCB made approximately \$29 million in profits and collected some \$135 million more in taxes. How that tax money would be made up should Thornburgh's plan go through is also of concern.

"In this time now, especially with the loss of Revenue Sharing Funds, there is a cry for more funds, not less," Lemmond said. "A lot of towns and cities are concerned about that right now."

Meanwhile, the LCB has initiated a legal battle of its own and has also asked the Commonwealth Court to block Thornburgh's order to overturn the system.

Other legislators have accused Thornburgh of grandstanding and don't believe his plan will go through once Casey takes office. Casey, who favors the current system with some reforms, could also push for legislation to offset Thornburgh's proposal before substantial changes can be made.

Prison chaplain speaks to club

The Rev. Mr. Gary Stefanski, Chaplain of Luzerne County Prison, was the speaker at a recent Back Mountain Kiwanis breakfast meeting at Irem Country Club, Dallas.

He described the nature of his work at the prison, and the importance of counseling and ministering to the spiritual needs of the inmates as well as their families.



Dallas Post/Jane Renn

Employees oppose proposal

Henry Husted, of Plymouth, a part-time employee at the Liquor Store in Dallas, packages some merchandise being purchased by two customers of the store. Employees of the local Liquor Store are in complete disagreement with Gov. Richard Thornburgh's proposal to abolish the state-operated liquor system.

'It stinks!'

Liquor store employees are not happy with governor's new idea

By JANE RENN
Staff Writer

A local liquor store manager is not happy, to say the least, about the possibility that the state-owned liquor business will become private.

"It stinks!" said Louis Volpetti, a Pittston man who has worked at a Dallas liquor store for six years and has been in the business for 16. Volpetti had quite a bit more to say about Governor Thornburgh's going away present to the state.

"Naturally, we're concerned about our jobs," Volpetti said, "but we're also looking out for the interests of the people."

Volpetti believes private stores will pursue customers more aggressively, causing increased consumption and more social problems. Even with some of their 20 percent-off sales, he said, the state is "not pushing it; we don't twist your arm." He pointed to several customers in his store. "The business is here," he said, "shrugging his shoulders."

Private stores, Volpetti added, would charge as much as possible, but even with the extra

dollars coming in through their efforts, the state will only lose money in the long run.

"See all this money?" he said, pointing to the cash register drawer as he finished ringing up a customer. "All this goes to the state. Tonight it'll be in the bank."

Volpetti also believes that convenience stores which would begin to carry liquor under new laws would limit selection to only a few fast-selling brands, hurting customers with more selective tastes.

And, he said, private owners would be more interested in sales than in whom they sold to, such as minors.

Customers benefit in another way, also, Volpetti claimed. When state-run stores have a sale, he said, they really are sales.

"The public flocks here when there's a sale because they know it's a legitimate sale, and not a percentage off a number someone made up."

But the current system is not perfect and could be improved, Volpetti admitted. However, "On the whole, the philosophy of the system is good."

As for the comparatively high pay rate received by clerks, (approximately \$9 per hour), Volpetti feels it stimulates the economy. Paying fewer employees a higher wage makes more sense, he stated, than paying several a lower wage, even if it does make sale days harder on his staff of six.

There is one part-time worker at the store, Henry Husted, who works 13 hours per week (at a lower rate than the full-timers).

Husted believes the plan to privatize the liquor stores is just "a lot of words now." Still, he thinks compromises will be made, especially in hiring.

Applicants must now receive priority status if they are a veteran or the spouse of a veteran. Husted believes that test scores will become less important and experience in customer services will count for more.

Volpetti is very firm in his opinions.

"I think it's all be overturned," he stated. And he's ready to debate anyone over the quality and desirability of state-run liquor business: "My arguments will far outweigh the opponent's."

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