



Lisa Ellis <director@illinoiswine.com>

Next Steps for HB3172: Illinois Wine Industry Production and Self-Distribution Limits

1 message

Lisa Ellis <director@illinoiswine.com>

Tue, May 6, 2025 at 2:44 PM

To: Jeremy Kruidenier <jkruidenier@ilwdsi.org>

Cc: Kareem Kenyatta <kareem@thirdreading.consulting>, Benjamin Whipple <ben@thirdreading.consulting>, Theresa Mah <theresa@theresamah.com>, Ryan Phelps <ryanphelps@cladandcordon.com>, Jeremy Wombles <womblesjc@gmail.com>

Dear Jeremy,

I hope this message finds you well. I am reaching out to continue our dialogue regarding HB3172, which seeks to modernize the production and self-distribution limits for Illinois winemakers. As you know, the Illinois Grape Growers and Vintners Alliance (IGGVA) has been advocating for these changes since 2021, and we appreciate your engagement—even as we recognize the Wine and Spirits Distributors of Illinois (WSDI) has maintained a position of opposition.

As a reminder, following our meeting at your Chicago office early in this process (I believe it was first quarter 2021 attended by Jeremy Wombles and myself), we immediately responded to your concerns about the self-distribution cap by reducing our request from 50,000 gallons to 25,000 gallons. This was done in good faith, based on your feedback that WSDI would review the request at your board level. Despite this immediate and significant concession, and our repeated requests for a counterproposal or compromise figure from WSDI, we have to date not received any alternative numbers or suggestions to review.

We have also been asked several times to provide a list of wineries that would benefit from these changes. While we are transparent about industry support (see the attached letter and supporting wineries), we are not willing to disclose individual members' business plans or proprietary information, as this would be inappropriate and could disadvantage our members competitively.

What remains clear is that Illinois wineries are boxed out of the market by current limits and by a three-tier system that heavily favors distributors at the expense of small producers. The current 25,000-gallon production cap forces wineries to artificially restrict their growth just to maintain self-distribution rights, while distributors generally have shown little interest in representing or promoting Illinois wines effectively. This is not a sustainable path for our industry, especially in the face of ongoing economic challenges and distributor consolidation.

Our position is straightforward:

- The current system is inequitable and stifles local business growth, innovation, and tax revenue for the state.
- Aligning our production and self-distribution limits with those of other craft beverage sectors is essential for a fair and competitive marketplace.

As you are aware, House Leader Theresa Mahl, our bill sponsor, has convened a stakeholder working group to move this and other liquor-related bills forward. The initial meeting took place on March 18th with a clear directive that forward movement was expected. We believe the time has come for WSDI to provide a concrete proposal or specific feedback on what numbers or terms would be acceptable for your organization.

Next Steps:

We respectfully request that WSDI respond with a clear, written proposal or specific counter-offer regarding self-distribution and production limits. If there are particular concerns or data points you wish to discuss, please share them so we can address them directly and transparently. Our goal is to reach a workable solution that allows Illinois wineries to grow into stronger candidates for distribution partnerships, benefiting the entire industry.

Please review the attached letter to Illinois legislators, which outlines our rationale and the broad support for this initiative. We look forward to your timely response and to working together toward a resolution that supports Illinois' economic and agricultural future.


Best regards,

Lisa Ellis, Executive Director
Illinois Grape Growers and Vintners Alliance
901 S 2nd St, Ste 101
Springfield, IL 62704
217.726.8518

www.illinoiswine.com

[Find A Winery Near You!](#)

ILLINOIS WINE

 **Support Letter for HB3172 May 6 2025_FINAL.pdf**
240K