

# Bill Aims to Extend Bar Hours in Select California Cities

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SACRAMENTO -- A California state senator has authored a bill that would allow bars to serve alcohol until 4 a.m. instead of the current 2 a.m. cut-off time. A similar bill died in committee earlier this year. The newly written bill by Senator Scott Wiener, D-San Francisco, applies to six cities instead of the entire state.

The Mayors of Sacramento, San Francisco, Oakland, Long Beach, Los Angeles and West Hollywood support the idea, according to Wiener. Therefore they are the cities included in the bill.

"Nightlife matters a lot in California," said Wiener during a Tuesday evening conversation with FOX40. "Particularly in our cities."

The bill gives cities the authority to determine specifics of the policy.

"All this does is it moves away from a one-size-fits-all approach where the entire state has to shut down at 2 a.m., and says we're going to let these cities make their own decisions," Wiener explained. "They can decide to stay at 2 a.m. if they want to. Or they can go to 3 a.m. or 4 a.m. They can decide it's only going to be in one part of the city."

Cities can also choose to allow the later closing time only on weekends, or certain nights of the year.

"I'm actually kind of shocked that he would reintroduce it," said Bruce Lee Livingston, executive director of Alcohol Justice, when asked about Senator Wiener's bill. Alcohol Justice is a watchdog group promoting responsible alcohol policies.

According to Livingston, the later closing time would put communities in danger, pushing alcohol-related problems such as assault and DUI into the early morning hours when commuters are starting to hit the road.

"It's a small incentive for bar owners, but it's a terrible economic burden and social burden on police, first responders, emergency room services," Livingston said.

"Yes, people want to stay out late and party," Livingston added. "That's fine. They can do it in their homes if they're of legal age."

The bill requires cities to engage in a detailed public process, Wiener assures its critics.

"Law enforcement has to be involved in that process," Wiener said. "And they have to come up with a public safety plan and a transportation plan. So this is a very rigorous process. And I'm confident that these cities will get it right."

The bill will be introduced in January.

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