

From: Lew Bryson [mailto:lew@lewbryson.com]
Sent: Friday, December 07, 2007 12:03 PM
Subject: Re: Keg Registration

I've looked into keg registration for quite a while, written about, and testified before a Pennsylvania state legislature joint committee against a keg registration law. I've looked at every study I could find on keg registration, and there is NO direct linkage between keg registration and rates of underage drinking.

If your town puts through a law on keg registration, here's what will happen. There will be new paperwork, maybe onerous, maybe not, depending on what method they use and how crazy the proponents are. There will be large fines if the keg shows up where there's underage drinking, but there will probably also be large fines if a registration sticker/tag comes off the keg. Keg sales in town will drop to practically zero, as everyone either goes out of town to buy kegs or starts buying cases/liquor/weed. Proponents of the law will say it will work, but only if the surrounding towns/counties do it too. They will. It still won't work. Give us the state and you'll see, will be the next cry. It will go through, and nothing will happen...and no one will say anything.

Your main point should be that you'd be happy to do this, if anyone could provide real proof that keg registration has resulted in a measurable decrease in underage drinking anywhere. Not a projected decrease, not a meta-study that looks at every anti-drinking program at once, not a decline in keg sales or keg parties: a measurable decrease in underage drinking directly linked to a keg registration. They will not be able to. I've looked at every study that supporters quote as justifying keg registration: there's nothing there, and it's easy to show.

My main beef with keg registration is that it makes it more expensive and more irritating to get a keg for home use, which I do fairly often. But right behind that is a concerned citizen's anger that we're wasting time, effort, money, and goodwill on something that just doesn't do a damned thing to stop dangerous drinking.

There are exceptions to the pain-in-the-neck factor: keg registration in some states is relatively benign and low-key (and just as ineffective). But there are also places -- like Boston -- where keg registration has been bumped up to the next level: police are notified when someone buys a keg, and they come by and "visit." That's giving me some serious privacy concerns, but you know what? Neither the Libertarian Party nor the ACLU gave a diddley damn when I contacted them about it.

As you might guess, I have some materials on this. If you'd like a copy, e-mail me.

Lew Bryson
Read my bi-weekly beer column in Conde Nast Portfolio:
<http://www.portfolio.com/views/columns/first-draft/>