

WeHo May Become One of Six Cities Where Bars Can Pour Until Four

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West Hollywood is one of six cities in California where bars could remain open as late 4 a.m. if the state legislature passes a new bill proposed by state Sen. Scott Weiner (D-San Francisco).

Weiner announced today that he plans to introduce the bill in January. An earlier bill introduced by Weiner, which would have allowed any city in California to extend drinking hours to 4 a.m., failed to pass. Currently no alcohol can be served in public places after 2 a.m.

Weiner's latest bill would establish a five-year pilot program known as the LOCAL (Let Our Communities Adjust Late-Night) Act. Limiting it to the six cities that endorsed Weiner's earlier bill makes it more likely to get passed.

Those cities are Los Angeles, Long Beach, Oakland, Sacramento, San Francisco and West Hollywood. The LOCAL Act would let each of those cities decide whether to extend its drinking hours and to choose exactly when bars would have to stop pouring.

The West Hollywood City Council endorsed Weiner's earlier proposal in a four to one vote in April, with Councilmember Lauren Meister opposing extension of the bar hours. The City Council also has embraced the sale of recreational marijuana with a program that will start issuing licenses to dealers next year.

Extending bar hours has drawn opposition from some in Los Angeles such as L.A. City Councilmember Paul Koretz. Other opponents of the earlier Weiner proposal are Alcohol Justice, the California Alcohol Policy Alliance, Mothers Against Drunk Driving and the Los Angeles

Drug and Alcohol Policy Alliance. Extending bar hours got the support of the California Restaurant Association, California Travel Association and the California Hotel & Lodging Association.

If Weiner's bill passes and is signed by Gov. Jerry Brown, the question of whether to actually extend bar and restaurant drinking hours and on what days and until what hour is likely to provoke a community debate in West Hollywood. On the one hand, the city depends heavily on revenue from tourists (the hotel room occupancy tax is the single largest source of revenue to the city's general fund). And West Hollywood is known as a nightlife destination, with its Boystown gay nightlife district on the west side of Santa Monica Boulevard and the many clubs on the Sunset Strip and relatively new ones such as Delilah in the Center City area.

On the other hand, West Hollywood is [the city with the most restaurant/bar liquor licenses per capita](#) in all of Los Angeles County. Based on the number of restaurant/bar liquor licenses in 2015, [WeHo by the Numbers](#) reports that West Hollywood also ranks No. 1 in all of California in licenses per square mile, with 116. An organization called the [Safe WeHo Leadership Council](#) has been formed to develop ways to reduce alcohol-related problems in West Hollywood.

Opponents of Weiner's proposal have questioned whether extending bar hours will lead to an increase in drunken driving and other alcohol-related crimes and injuries and whether they will tax local public safety organizations such as the West Hollywood Sheriff's Station.