

## STORE MAY BE FIRST IN OHIO TO SELL LIQUOR ON SUNDAYS

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### THISWEEK NEWSPAPERS

An Upper Arlington market is about to become the first in Ohio to sell liquor by the bottle on Sundays.

Neighbors of **Huffman's Market** voted last week to give the retailer that option. About 85 percent of the voters in Upper Arlington's Ward 2, Precinct E, supported the local ballot issue.

The vote isn't binding, but the Ohio Division of Liquor Control says it intends to respect voters' wishes and amend the state contract that currently prevents Huffman's, 2140 Tremont Center, from selling carryout liquor on Sundays.

Bars and restaurants may sell liquor on that day, provided the drinks are consumed on site.

"We have indicated we are going to amend the (Huffman's) contract after we receive certification from the board of elections," said Matt Mullins, a spokesman for the state liquor agency.

"This is the first time the issue has been before us, and Huffman's would be the first contracted agent in the state to be permitted to sell spirituous liquor on Sundays."

The Franklin County Board of Elections expects the vote to be certified by April.

"The liquor department has assured us that within a short time of receiving that certification, they will have a new contract drawn up for me," market owner Tim Huffman said.

"Once they sign it and I sign it, we'll be able to sell liquor on Sundays."

Huffman's Market, which has operated in the Tremont Shopping Center since 1986, now sells beer, wine and liquor Monday through Saturday. On Sunday, the store is permitted to sell beer from 10 a.m. to midnight and wine from 1 p.m. to midnight.

The contract amendment sought by Huffman would enable his market to sell any alcoholic beverage -- beer, wine or liquor -- from 10 a.m. to midnight on Sunday.

"We're trying to fix it so whenever a customer comes in, it's the same all the time," Huffman said. "It's a matter of customer convenience, and it would make things simpler for us."

Huffman's foray into Sunday liquor sales comes as Ohio is revisiting its liquor laws.

For decades, the state dictated that liquor could be sold only at state-regulated liquor stores, or at licensed bars or restaurants.

The state phased out liquor stores by 1995 and permitted businesses such as groceries and carryouts to sell liquor on a contract basis.

Until now, however, every contract has forbidden the sale of liquor on Sunday.

Huffman said the Division of Liquor Control's apparent willingness to amend his contract is "very good news."

"I thought there might be a few more loopholes we'd have to jump through," he said.

While acknowledging that Huffman is a "pioneer," Mullins said it's unclear how his case might apply to other retailers seeking similar changes in their contracts.

Before altering any other contract, he said, the liquor agency wants to see how the Ohio General Assembly deals with legislation that would eliminate contractual prohibitions on Sunday liquor sales.

That legislation, Senate Bill 164, was approved by the Senate on Feb. 18. The bill, sponsored by Republican Sen. Robert L. Schuler of Cincinnati, has yet to be assigned to a committee in the House.

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